

IELTS Speaking

The Most Comprehensive Guide Intermediate

- 38 different topics & key vocabulary
- 1000+ vocabulary exercises
- 300+ IELTS speaking parts 1-3 questions & model answers
- 14 types of part 1 + 3 questions & 40 different ways of answering them



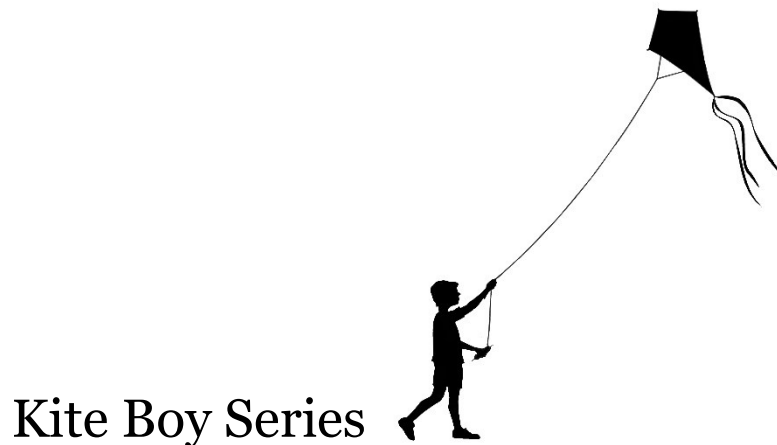
Kite Boy Series

Michael C. Thorp

IELTS Speaking

The Most Comprehensive Guide

Intermediate



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Preface

As an IELTS examiner and teacher for over 20 years, I feel that most of the IELTS speaking test study materials are woefully inadequate. They don't prepare students with enough useful vocabulary, vocabulary exercises, speaking practice, and detailed practice structures and examples that can best enable them to attain a band score 6 or 7 or higher. The Kite Boy IELTS speaking series of books (Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Advanced, and All in One) aims to rectify all that by providing the most comprehensive guide to the IELTS speaking test.

The intermediate book includes:

- 38 different Part 1, 2 and 3 topics and key vocabulary
- 1000+ vocabulary exercises
- 300+ practice questions, with model answers and suggested structures
- 8 different types of part 1 questions and 22 different ways of answering them, and 6 different types of part 3 questions and 18 different ways of answering them

Specific aims of the book

It is to provide useful vocabulary, highlight ways of answering the different questions, with model answers and lots of practice questions, so students can feel confident about how to do well in the IELTS speaking test.

How Teachers Could Use this Book

As per the attached example lesson, here is how I have a great 3-hour lesson using this book for one topic for an intermediate class.

1. Play a TED talk video (~5 minutes long) related to the topic.

2. Back to the board (key word vocabulary)

The teacher puts the students into 4 teams, who stand in front of the whiteboard with one each team member facing them, seated on a chair – back to the board. The teacher writes a word from the key vocabulary on the board, and the students who are standing have to describe the word to their team member seated, without saying the word or using body language or the root word. If one of the people seated know the answer, they raise their hand, and their team gets one point if it's correct.

3. Pronunciation Practice (key word vocabulary)

Once back to the board is over, the teacher can then model the more difficult words, and get the students to practice. The teacher can also ask the students questions about themselves related to the words to provide meaningful context.

4. Vocabulary Exercises

Project the exercises onto a whiteboard and number the students 1-10 and have them come up and complete the first and then the second 10-question vocabulary exercises. Afterwards, the teacher can again get them practice pronouncing any difficult words and ask questions about them to reinforce meaning and usage.

5. Part 1 Practice Questions

Project the part 1 practice gap-fill questions on the whiteboard and select different students to complete the gaps in the model answers. Then, the students can practice answering them in pairs, following the structures given, but with answers that are true for themselves.

Afterwards, the teacher could select different students to stand up and answer the questions to the class and provide feedback.

6. Speaking - Part 2

Students complete the one-minute preparation for topic in the spaces provided. Before the students do their two-minute speeches in pairs, the teacher could go around the class and ask each student to very briefly tell them what their story (problem) is.

7. Speaking - Part 3

For the part 3 questions, the teacher can work through the model answers provided and then brainstorm ways of answering the practice questions. Then, the students can practice answering them in pairs, following the structures given.

Afterwards, the teacher could select different students to stand up and answer the questions to the class and provide feedback.

8. Different Types of Part 1 or 3 Questions

For the different types of part 1 or 3 questions, the teacher could brainstorm ways of answering one type of part 1 or 3 question, and then the students could practice them in pairs.

Afterwards, the teacher could select different students to stand up and answer the questions to the class and provide feedback.

Contents

1. Preface.....	3
2. Contents.....	5
3. IELTS Test Overview.....	6
4. The Marking System & Guidelines.....	7
5. Units 1-13: Speaking – Parts 1 + 2	
• Part 1 test format and general approach.....	9
• Part 1 - do's and don'ts	9
• Part 2 test format and general approach.....	12
• How to tell a story and do the one minute preparation	13
• Part 2 - do's and don'ts	14
• Part 2 - 3 model answer 2-minute talks	15
• 13 speaking part 1 + 2 topics.....	18
○ key vocabulary	
○ vocabulary exercises	
○ part 1 : practice questions + model answers	
○ part 2: topics, one minute preparation sheets + suggested approaches	
6. Units 14-38: Speaking – Parts 2 + 3	
• Part 3 test format and general approach	94
• Part 3 - do's and don'ts.....	94
• 25 speaking - part 2 + 3 topics	98
○ key vocabulary	
○ vocabulary exercises	
○ part 2: topics, one minute preparation sheets + suggested approaches	
○ part 3: model answers + practice questions	
○ 6 different types of part 3 questions: 18 ways of answering them, with model answers + practice questions	
7. Appendices	
A. Common grammatical errors.....	233
B. Complex sentences	234
C. Advice for low level English speakers	235
D. Answer key for speaking - parts 1 + 2 (gap fill questions).....	236
E. Additional speaking - part 2 topics	241
F. Eight types of speaking - part 1 questions	247
G. Six types of speaking - part 3 questions.....	266
H. IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors.....	279



IELTS Test Overview

There are two IELTS tests: Academic and General, which are graded in the same way. Each has four sections, which are completed in the following order: listening, reading, and writing on one day, with no break between the tests, and then speaking on either that day or within seven days before or after it.

A score between 1 and 9 is awarded for each section, and the final IELTS score is the average of the four.

A. Listening Test (~40 minutes)

Listen to four recordings of native English speakers (~30 minutes) and answer 40 questions, and then you have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to the answer sheet.

B. Reading Test (60 minutes)

Read three texts and answer 40 questions:

- Academic: three long texts taken from books, journals, magazines, or newspapers
- General: three texts taken from books, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, or company handbooks and guidelines.

C. Writing Test (60 minutes)

Complete two writing tasks:

- Academic: Task 1: a report (150+ words/20 minutes) based on a graph, table, chart, or diagram, and Task 2: an essay (250+ words/40 minutes)
- General: Task 1: a letter (150+ words/20 minutes), and Task 2: an essay (250+ words/40 minutes)

D. Speaking Test (11-14 minutes)

Answers questions in Parts 1 & 3, and speak for 1-2 minutes in Part 2

- Part 1: (4-5 minutes)
Answer up to 12 questions based on three different everyday topics
- Part 2: (3-4 minutes)
1-2 minute talk, with one minute to prepare before speaking
- Part 3: (4-5 minutes)
Answer up to 6 questions based on two topics similar to Part 2.

Marking System & Guidelines

The speaking test is marked on four criteria: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammar, and pronunciation. Each area is given a score between 1 and 9, which is the highest, and the final speaking score is the average of all four.

A. Fluency & Coherence

- speak without noticeable hesitations, repetition, or self-correction (fluency)
- give well explained answers, not short ones (fluency)
- connect your thoughts with a range of linking words (don't overuse them) (fluency)
- answer the questions clearly and logically (coherence)

IELTS Public Band Descriptors (full list, page 279)

Band	Fluency and coherence
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

B. Lexical Resource

- use a range of uncommon vocabulary (accurately)
- use a range of idiomatic expressions (correctly and appropriately)
- don't repeat the questions (use pronouns or sometimes synonyms)

IELTS Public Band Descriptors (full list, page 279)

Band	Lexical resource
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics• uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inaccuracies• generally paraphrases successfully

C. Grammar

- make as few grammatical errors as possible (use the correct verb tense, subject-verb agreement; see Appendix A, page 233)
- use a range of complex sentences (see Appendix B, page 234)

IELTS Public Band Descriptors (full list, page 279)

Band	Grammatical range and accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately• produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses a wide range of structures flexibly• produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility• frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

D. Pronunciation

- group words within sentences (chunking)
- highlight the important words (stress)
- raise and lower the pitch of your voice (intonation)
- produce the correct sounds

IELTS Public Band Descriptors (full list, page 279)

Band	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety• sustains flexible use of features throughout• is effortless to understand
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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

Speaking - Part 1

Format (~12 questions, 4-5 minutes)

You are asked around 12 questions on three different everyday topics. The first topic is about either where you live or what you do.

To answer each question, you have on average about 20 seconds, which is roughly two long sentences.

General Approach for Answering All Questions

Short answer + reason + possibly, an example

Starting phrase	+ Answer	+ Reason	+ Example
I think	_____	because	like
I believe	_____	since	such as
I guess	_____	as	For example,
I suppose	_____	for	For instance,
I'd say	_____	given	as was seen
As I see it	_____	owing to	A good example
Probably	_____	due to	A good case in point
Possibly/Maybe	_____		
Well/Actually	_____		

Agree

Yes/I agree/For sure
Absolutely/Of course
I guess so/I suppose so
No question

Disagree

No/Not at all/I disagree
I'm not so sure/I don't think so
I wouldn't say so



Do's

1. Use a range of uncommon vocabulary correctly
2. Use a range of complex sentences (see Appendix B, page 234)
3. Use a range of linking words
4. Use the correct verb tense, particularly, past simple for past actions (see Appendix A, page 233).
5. If you don't understand a question or word, immediately ask the examiner to clarify, and do so very simply and quickly:
 - Sorry, what was that?
 - What does "X" mean?
 - Could you paraphrase the question?

Don'ts

1. Don't repeat the question or key words in it

You get no points for repeating the question. Give a short direct answer, using pronouns, and then explain it as clearly as you can.

Example: *"Do you come from a small or large family?"*

Poor answer: *"I come from a small family."*

(Why poor? It repeats all the key words in the question.)

Good answer: *"I'd say, it's probably an average-sized one, comprised of my parents, two siblings, and our dog, Fifi, which is a fox terrier with the most adorable eyes."*

(Why good? Short answer, using pronouns, and an explanation using a complex sentence and uncommon vocabulary.)

2. Don't overuse linking words

Don't use lots of linking words or phrases to introduce your answer. You only have on average around 20 seconds to answer each question, so the majority of time should be spent giving a short clear answer and explaining it.

Example: *Why do young ones like to play games on smartphones?*

Poor answer: *"That's an interesting question. I guess there are a number of possible reasons, and if I had to give one off the top of my head, I would probably say..."*

(Why poor? After nearly 10 seconds, there is still no answer, and, unless you are a politician, it's not a natural way of speaking.)

3. Don't give a list of answers

A list usually has no complex structures and shows no ability to explain something clearly in detail.

Example: *"What do you like about the area you live in?"*

Poor answer: *"It has some nice parks and swimming pools, a great shopping mall and markets, and a nice neighborhood."*

(Why poor? No complex sentences or detailed explanation.)

Good answer: *"What I really enjoy is Central Park given it's terrific for doing exercise, like jogging or walking the dog, as it has an enormous walking track, and huge trees and beautiful flower beds, which make it a pleasant place to relax and enjoy nature."*

(Why good? Short answer, well explained, using complex sentences and uncommon vocabulary.)

4. Don't repeat keywords or phrases

Repetition shows a lack of vocabulary. Use pronouns or synonyms where possible.

Example: *"What are some problems in your city?"*

Poor answer: *"The biggest problem is air pollution, as the increasing number of cars on the road are worsening the air pollution in my city, and more and more factories are adding to the air pollution."*

(Why poor? Should use pronouns to avoid repetition of "problem" and "air pollution.")

Good answer: *The main one is air pollution due to the increasing number of factories and cars on the road and the lack of an effective public transport system, which are causing dangerously high levels of toxins in the air."*

(Why good? Used the pronoun "one" for "problem" and the synonym "high levels of toxins in the air" for "air pollution.")

5. Try to avoid memorized answers

Answers that are obviously memorized get a band score of 1. Answer each question as clearly and accurately as you can without giving memorized ones.

6. Don't overuse idioms

Using idioms inappropriately or unnaturally will negatively affect your lexical resource score. There is no need to artificially insert idiomatic expressions like "knee high to a grasshopper," or "escape the hustle and bustle of city life," unless they are clearly suitable as there are over 10,000 phrasal verbs in English, most of which are idiomatic expressions, such as "grow up," "take off," and "look after."

Example: *"What was the best holiday you ever had in your country?"*

Poor answer: *"I remember when I was knee high to a grasshopper, to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and let our hair down, we went to Ocean Beach, which had a picture perfect white sandy beach with crystal clear waters."*

(Why poor? Unnatural and inappropriate use of idioms.)

7. Don't give short answers

To get a band score 7 in fluency, you need to be able to give well explained answers easily.

Example: *"What is the area like that you live in?"*

Poor answer: *"It's quite nice and peaceful, with nice neighbors."*

(Why poor? Too short, no complex sentences and explanation.)

Good answer: *"Probably the best way to describe it is suburban middle-class since it essentially a working-class residential area, with two main shopping malls and a few sports facilities."*

(Why good? Short answer, well explained, with a complex sentence and uncommon vocabulary.)

Speaking - Part 2

Format (1 minute preparation, 1-2 minute talk)

You are asked up talk for 1-2 minutes. Before doing so, you are given paper, a pencil and a topic, and one minute to prepare.

Note: you must talk about the topic on the card, but you don't have to discuss the points under the "You should say" section below it. They are only suggestions. I recommend introducing the topic and telling a personal story relating to it, rather than just mechanically going through the suggestions.

Example

Describe a subject that you enjoyed studying at school.

You should say:

*what it was
when you studied it
who taught you*

and you should also say why you enjoyed it.

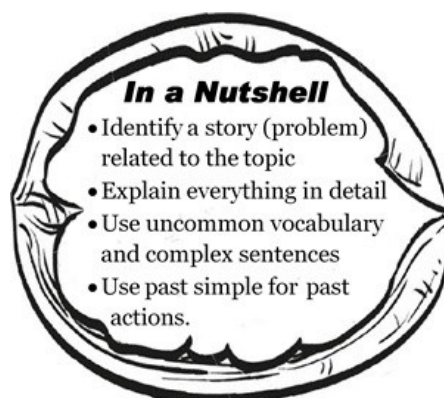
General Approach of the Two Minute Talk

1. Introduce topic + tell a personal story relating to it
or
2. Introduce topic + describe it + tell a personal story relating to it.

To tell a story, identify some experience you had relating to the topic that involved a problem. A problem is the heart of any story. Then, describe the story in detail: the main events, focusing on the problem, how you solved it, and the final outcome.

Examples

1. *Describe a piece of technology.*
Topic: my smartphone
Problem: screen broken in motorbike accident
2. *Describe a foreign culture you like.*
Topic: Korean culture
Problem: addicted to Korean boy bands



Starting phrases:

Introducing the topic (try to start with a complex sentence)

- Last week,
- Around two months ago,
- When I was 11 years old,
- When I started my second year in high school,
- As far back as I can remember,
- My earliest memory of...

Describing the topic

- In terms of her/his/its appearance,
- What I'll never forget about her/him/it was
- What was most striking/unforgettable/special/unique about her/him/it, was...

Telling a story

- I remember when I was in grade 6,
- I remember one time when I was on holiday in...
- For example, when I was 9 years old,
- One time, I went to...

Telling a personal story is the easiest way to talk for two minutes as you are simply repeating things that you have seen or experienced. Most candidates who get a band score 8 or 9 do this.

From my experience, it is great if teachers ask the students to tell the class what topic and problem will they talk about before they do their two minute talks as it inspires the students to hear the stories that others will be discussing.

How to Tell a Story and Do the One Minute Preparation

The heart of any story is a problem. Therefore, for the one minute preparation, students should think of some experience they had relating to the topic that involved a problem. Then, they should note down ideas and uncommon words to describe the topic, the main events of what happened in their story, focusing on the problem, how they overcame it, and the final result.

Three parts of a story

A. Introduce the topic (setting): where, when, who, and goal (creates mood + expectations).

Example: "Base camp, Mount Everest, Nepal, May 11-12, 1996, a group of climbers plan to take clients to the top of Mount Everest."

B. Main events and problems/difficulties/obstacles (creates interest)

Describe what happened - the main events - in detail from the beginning to end, focusing on the problems, difficulties and obstacles, and how you overcome them (no problem = no story). Also, describe your feelings, smells, sounds, and how things felt.

Example 1 (no problems=no story): "We climbed Mt. Everest without an issue."

Example 2 (problems=story): "We tried to climb Mt. Everest and were suddenly hit with an unexpected storm, causing our team to become separated, with zero visibility and a lack of oxygen."

C. Final Outcome: what happened in the end? How did you feel? What did you learn?
Example: "The storm ultimately led to the death of 13 people."

Do's

1. Talk for the full two minutes until the examiner says, "Thank you," so you can utilize every second to show the examiner your language ability
2. Use a range of uncommon vocabulary appropriately and correctly
3. Use a range of complex sentences (see Appendix B, 234)
4. Use a range of linking words
5. Use the correct verb tense, particularly, past simple for talking about the past
6. If you don't understand the topic or a word, immediately ask the examiner to clarify, and do so very simply and quickly:
 - Sorry, what does "X" mean?
 - Could you paraphrase the topic?

Don'ts

1. Don't start off reading the topic from the topic card

You get no points for repeating what is written on it.

Example: "Describe a subject that you enjoyed studying at school."

Poor starting phrase: "A subject that I enjoyed studying at school was science"

Good starting phrase: "When I started my second year in high school, science wasn't one of my favourite subjects in the curriculum, but then I got a teacher who changed that."

2. Don't state things without explaining them

If you say something, explain it in detail, using reasons or examples, to make it clear. If you don't, it may be difficult to talk for the whole two minutes.

3. Don't repeat keywords or phrases

Repetition shows a lack of vocabulary. Use pronouns or accurate synonyms where possible.

4. Don't give a memorized talk

Memorized talks get a band score of 1.

5. Don't overuse idioms

Using idioms inappropriately or unnaturally will negatively affect your vocabulary score. There are over 10,000 phrasal verbs in English, most of which are idioms, so there is no need to artificially insert idiomatic expressions like "knee high to a grasshopper," or "escape the hustle and bustle of city life," unless they are clearly appropriate.

Example

Poor use of idioms: "I remember when I was knee high to a grasshopper, to escape the hustle and bustle of city life, we went, once in a blue moon to let our hair down, to Ocean Beach, which was picture perfect."

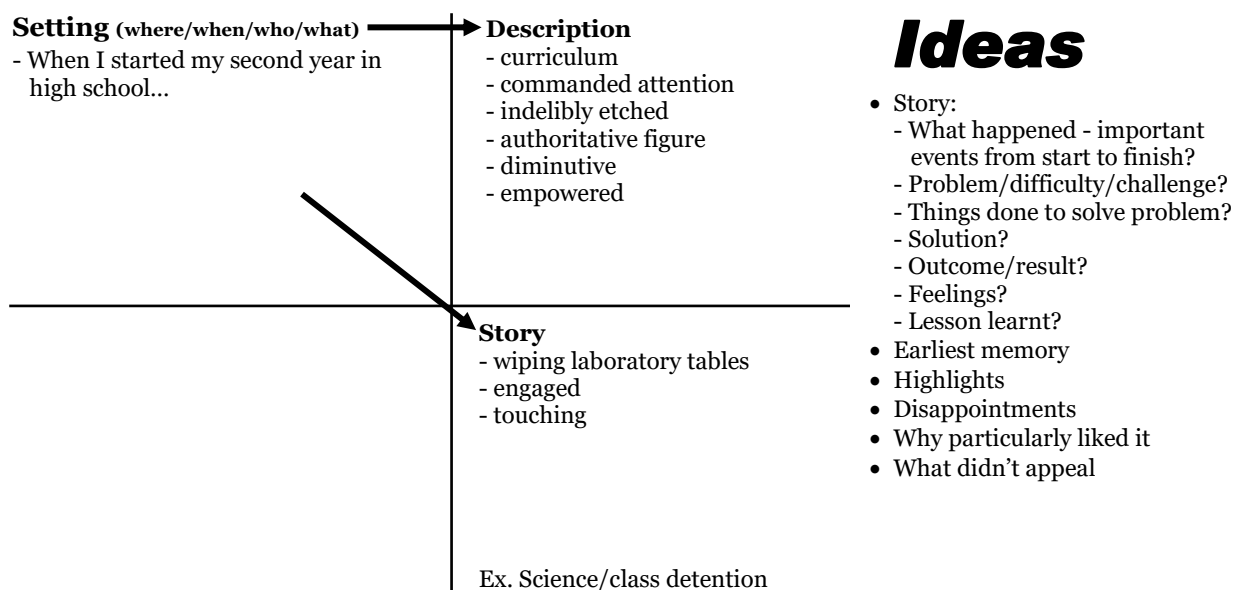
Example 1

Topic: Describe a subject that you liked at school.

One Minute Preparation - identify a story (problem) related to the topic

Write down:

1. main verb tense
2. uncommon words and ideas to describe the topic + story related to it.



Model Two Minute Talk

A. Introduce Topic - Setting

When I started my second year in high school, science wasn't one of my favourite subjects in the **curriculum**, but then I got a teacher who changed that.

B. Describe Topic

While I can't remember her name, her face is **indelibly etched** on my mind since in spite of her rather **diminutive** size, she **commanded** your attention as if you were in the **presence** of some real **authoritative figure** whose voice you **dreaded** to feel the **wrath** of. If you **dared** speak or even touched your pencil while she was talking, she'd immediately **bellow out** your full name and **demand** you stop talking or put it down. However, once she had your attention, the way she could explain and enable you to understand the different **aspects** of science was **remarkable**. You left her class feeling like you had really understood what she was **discussing**, and it left you feeling **empowered** as if you had really learned something.

C. Story Related To Topic

I remember one time when she held me back after class as I had done something wrong, and she made me wipe down the **laboratory tables**. It was something I never have forgotten because most of the time I was doing so, she was **engaging** me in **conversation**, discussing my family and what I wanted to do in the future. It was very **touching**. And after a year of studying under her, I had **developed** a **new found love** of science, which gave me the **confidence** and **self-belief** that I could do well at it.

bold = uncommon vocabulary

underlined = complex sentences

Speaking - Part 1+2 Topics

A. General Topics

1. Advertising (+ Describe questions).....	19
2. Communication (+ Describe questions).....	25
3. Daily Routine (+ Types of/Like questions).....	31
4. Gifts & Presents (+ Types of/Like questions).....	36
5. Health (+ Types of/Likes questions).....	42
6. Languages (+ How questions).....	47
7. Money (+ How questions).....	53
8. Musical instruments (+ Yes/No questions).....	57
9. Photographs & Pictures (+ Would questions).....	63
10. Restaurants (+ How questions).....	70
11. Smartphones (+ Frequency/Time questions).....	76
12. Transport (+ Compare questions).....	82
13. Weather & Seasons (+ Past questions).....	88

Advertising



Key Vocabulary

- ☐ **second/final year** high school student
- ☐ currently in grade 12
- ☐ **undergraduate** <> graduate/post-graduate
- ☐ **attending**/studying at
- ☐ neighbourhood/**locality**
- ☐ **bachelor/master's degree/Phd**
- ☐ **single-sex school** <> mixed-sex/**coeducational school**
- ☐ **curriculum**/syllabus
- ☐ **compulsory** subjects/core subjects
- ☐ **extra-curricular activities**/school club/sports
- ☐ learn a lot of **theoretical** <> **practical knowledge**
- ☐ highly/**well qualified teachers**
- ☐ inspiring/**stimulating learning environment**
- ☐ high standard of education/**high academic standards**
- ☐ **heavy** <> **light workload**
- ☐ outdated <> **modern academic and sports facilities**/grounds
- ☐ **after school classes**/intensive classes
- ☐ homework/**assignments**
- ☐ stress/**pressure**
- ☐ scholarship/grant
- ☐ overseas/abroad

Vocabulary Builder

A. Match the words to a synonym, antonym, or idiom.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. undergraduate | practical |
| 2. outdated | abroad |
| 3. single-sex | grant |
| 4. curriculum | coeducational |
| 5. theoretical | pressure |
| 6. inspiring | currently in grade 12 |
| 7. final year high school student | syllabus |
| 8. stress | modern |
| 9. overseas | graduate |
| 10. scholarship | stimulating |

B. Circle the odd word/s out.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. curriculum | course | subjects |
| 2. extra-curricular activities | soccer | after school classes |
| 3. compulsory subjects | optional subjects | core subjects |
| 4. high school certificate | bachelor degree | master's degree |
| 5. practical | theoretical | laboratory work |
| 6. pupil | classmate | staff |
| 7. inspiring | exhausting | stimulating |
| 8. single-sex | mixed | co-ed |
| 9. graduate | post-graduate | master's degree |
| 10. overseas | local | abroad |

C. Fill in the gaps with the correct word from the **key vocabulary above**, circle the correct word in **bold**, and then answer the questions, using the structure provided but with information that is true for you.

1. Do you work or are you a student?

I'm currently **a/the** _____ high school student, _____ a college that is in my _____.
(short answer + explanation)

2. What do you like most about your school/college?

Apart from **a/the** stimulating learning _____, it has great sports _____, such as **an/the** all-grass soccer field, and they organise many other _____ activities.
(contrast two answers + reason + explanation)

3. Is there anything about your course you would like to change?

The _____ work load is the only real issue I have as there are 12 subjects in the _____, so we are **in/under** a lot of _____.
(short answer + reason + explanation)

D. Fill in the gaps with the correct **form** of the word in brackets, and then answer the questions, using the structure provided but with information that is true for you.

1. Where do you study?

I'm currently a pupil, _____ (study) at British International High School, which is one of the top _____ (rank) ones in the country.
(short answer + explanation)

2. What do you like most about your school/college?

While it has _____ (excel) teachers, who are well _____ (qualify), what's particularly great about it are both the modern _____ (academia) and sports _____ (facility).
(contrast two answers + reason + explanation)

3. Is there anything about your course you would like to change?

One way the curriculum could be enhanced would be by having more of an emphasis on _____ (practice) classwork and less on _____ (theory) knowledge as it would make learning a bit more interesting.
(short answer + reason)

4. What would you like to do after you finish studying?

Once I've _____ (graduate), my plan is to get a _____ (scholar) and study in Australia, which I think would be wonderfully _____ (stimulate).
(short answer + explanation)

Additional Vocabulary

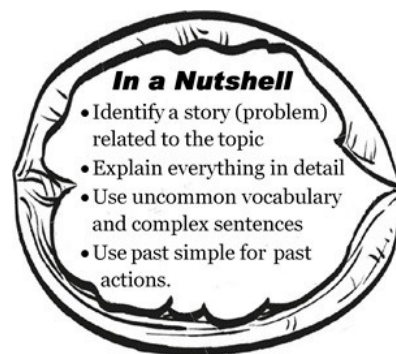
- student/pupil
- professor
- enrol/attend
- prerequisites/requirements
- local university//higher/tertiary education
- semesters/terms
- lessons/class work/coursework
- practical experience/ skills
- participate in extra-curricular activities (can encourage teamwork/unity)
- develop physical and intellectual growth of children
- develop interpersonal/social skills
- teach social skills/moral values
- broaden students' horizons/expand knowledge
- develop critical thinking skills
- science lab
- canteen
- code of conduct
- studious/conscientious
- concentrate
- punctual
- well-disciplined/diligent/hard-working
- self-driven/self-starter
- gifted at
- to learn something by heart/revise
- hit the books
- take part in/overcome
- tuition fees

- scholarship/grant
- to pass/passed my exams
- graduate from
- dropout
- qualification/degree
- ultimate goal/realise my dream of
- job prospects/market

Positives & Negatives

- learn a lot of theory/very theoretical
- deadlines
- disruptive students
- to goof around
- commit suicide
- skip classes
- parental pressure
- preferential treatment
- busy/long schedule/timetable
- + high standard of education/high quality of education/high academic standards
- + well/highly qualified teachers
- + good learning environment
- + learn a lot of practical skills and knowledge
- + curriculum provides a good balance of theoretical and practical skills
- + a supportive and stimulating environment
- + modern academic facilities
- + good sports facilities
- + prestigious/top ranking school

Advertising



Approach

State setting, describe topic, and tell 1-2 stories related to it.

One Minute Preparation - identify a story (problem) related to the topic

Write down:

1. main verb tense
2. uncommon words and ideas to describe the topic + story related to it.

Describe an advertisement that persuaded you to buy a product.

Setting (where/when/who/what)

- When I was in the sixth grade,
- I remember when I was 12 years old,
- I remember the time when...
- Around six years ago,
- As far back as I can remember,

Description

- appearance
- characteristics
- special qualities

Story 2

- important events?
- problem/difficulty/challenge?
- solution?
- outcome/result?
- feelings

Story 1

- important events?
- problem/difficulty/challenge?
- solution?
- outcome/result?
- feelings

Ideas

- Story:
 - What happened - important events from start to finish?
 - Problem/difficulty/challenge?
 - Things done to solve problem?
 - Solution?
 - Outcome/result?
 - Feelings?
 - Lesson learnt?
- Earliest memory
- Highlights
- Disappointments
- Why particularly liked it
- What didn't appeal

Ex. Online site/towel was not like picture

Vocabulary

- **ubiquitous**/everywhere
- **caught my eye**/got my attention/captured my interest
- **catchy tune**/jingle
- **memorable**/hard to forget/stay top of mind
- **television commercials**/billboards/print advertising/pop-up ads/junk mail/spam mail
- free-to-air television/cinema in-house advertising
- advertising **campaign**
- mass/**social media**
- **online advertising**
- enable messages to **reach a wide audience**/many people
- **raise public awareness**/can be informative
- trying to **influence people's thinking**/buying habits/create positive feelings
- **create demand**/increase sales
- fighting/**competing for our attention** (increased competition)
- **humorous**/amusing/entertaining<>tedious/**annoying**/time wasting
- **misleading**/false advertising/misinformation
- **promote harmful**/dangerous **products**
- can **manipulate** people
- present/create/maintain/**reinforce stereotypical perceptions**/images

Part 1 Questions

“Describe”

These ask you to describe someone or something.

Examples

- Tell me about an email that made you happy.
- What is your idea of a perfect home?
- What was it like growing up in your hometown?
- Tell me about a teacher you admired at school.

A. Short answer + explanation + reason + example

Starting phrase	+ Answer	+ Explanation	+ Reason	+ Example
I think	_____	which	because	like
I believe	_____	that	since	such as
I guess	_____	where	as	For example,
I suppose	_____	when	for	For instance,
I'd say	_____	who	given	
As I see it	_____	whose	owing to	
Probably	_____		due to the fact	
Possibly	_____			
Maybe	_____			
Well	_____			
Actually	_____			

Question 1: *Do you work or are you a student?*

Answer: I'm currently **working for a gaming company as a 3D graphics designer**, which is quite stimulating and challenging since you're always working on many different projects.

Question 2: *Tell me about an email that made you happy.*

Answer: When I was studying at university, I got **one from my mother, telling me that she'd be flying to Australia to see me**, which was *wonderful* news since I hadn't seen her for over a year and was missing her terribly.

Practice

1. Tell me about your school/workplace. It's Landmark Hospital, which is located in...
2. Tell me about a sport you have. I'm really into racquet sports, particularly, tennis, which...
3. Tell me about an important celebration in your country. The most popular one is Christmas, which...
4. Tell me about a TV show you enjoy. I'm a big fan of Lock up Abroad, which...
5. Tell me about some software you use regularly.
6. What is your city like?
7. What is your mother like?
8. What was your elementary school like?

Speaking - Part 3

Format (4.5-5.0 minutes, 6 questions)

You are asked up to six questions and follow up questions, which are designed to make it a discussion to fully test your actual English speaking ability.

Some questions can be very difficult to answer even in your own native tongue, such as:

- What is the impact of globalization on local producers in your country?
- What factors are important when you think of motivating someone?
- What do you think is the greatest threat of pollution?

However, remember IELTS is a test of your language ability. If you don't know the answer, say what you think might be generally true and explain why. To do this, you can use generalizing phrases such as:

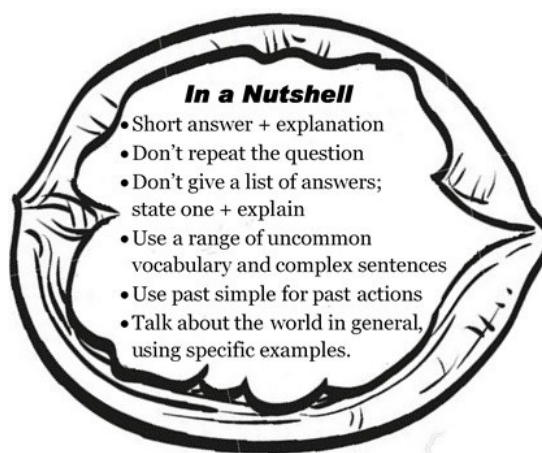
- By and large/Mainly,
- Mostly/For the most part,
- Generally speaking/In general,
- Usually/Typically,
- On the whole/As a rule,
- Nine times out of ten,

General approach

Short answer + reason + example.

Do's

1. Use a range of uncommon vocabulary appropriately and correctly
2. Use a range of complex sentences (see Appendix B, page 234)
3. Use a range of linking words
4. Use the correct verb tense, particularly, past simple for talking about the past
5. If you don't understand a question or word, immediately ask the examiner to clarify, and do so very simply and quickly:
 - Sorry, what was that?
 - What does "X" mean?
 - Could you paraphrase the question?



Don'ts

1. Never repeat the question or key words within

You get no points for repeating the question. Give a short direct answer, using pronouns if need be, and then explain it as clearly as you can, using a reason, example, or explanation.

Example: *What are some ways adults can be encouraged to play more sport?*

Poor answer: *"I think one way adults can be encouraged to play more sport is by the government running advertising for adults, encouraging adults to play more sport."*
(Why poor? It repeats all the key words in the question)

Good answer: *"I think if the government runs educational advertising that highlights the health benefits of doing so, in terms of helping them to live longer and stay healthy, it could motivate them to get out and do more exercise."*
(Why good? Short answer, using pronouns, and an explanation, using a complex sentence and uncommon vocabulary)

2. Never talk about yourself, family, or friends in Part 3

Part 3 is asking you to talk about the outside world not yourself. Say what you think is generally true about the world at large and use examples of well-known people, not of yourself, family or friends.

Example: *"What problems can people have when they try new activities for the first time?"*

Poor answer: *"The main problem can people have when they try new activities for the first time is a lack of skill. For example, when I tried playing tennis for the first time, it was not easy."*
(Why poor? The speaker is repeating the question and talking about himself, not the outside world)

Good answer: *The main one would have to be a lack of skill given they have little experience needed to perform reasonably well. For example, if someone has never played tennis before, it can be quite challenging and takes a while to develop some rhythm and play well.*
(Why good? The speaker is talking about the outside world, not himself)

3. Don't overuse linking words

Don't overuse linking words/phrases to introduce your answer. You only have on average around 25 seconds to answer each question, so the majority of time should be spent giving a short clear answer and explaining it.

Example: *Why should people set goals for themselves?*

Poor answer: *"That's an interesting question. I guess there are a number of possible reasons, and if I had to give one off the top of my head, I would probably say..."*
(Why poor? After nearly 10 seconds, there is still no answer)

4. Don't give a list of answers

A list usually has no complex structures and shows no ability to explain something clearly in detail.

Example: *"What are some environmental issues affecting your country?"*

Poor answer: *"The biggest one is air pollution, and then there's water pollution, and deforestation, not to mention global warming and getting fresh water can be an issue, too"*

(Why poor? No complex sentences or detailed explanation)

Good answer: *"The main one in the major cities is air pollution since there's no effective public transport system, like a subway, and the result is chronic traffic congestion and air pollution levels that are dangerously high; in fact, amongst the highest in the world."*

(Why good? Short answer, well explained, using complex sentences and uncommon vocabulary)

5. Don't repeat keywords or phrases

Repetition shows a lack of vocabulary. Use pronouns or synonyms where possible.

Example: *"What are some environmental issues affecting your country?"*

Poor answer: *"The biggest issue is air pollution, as the increasing number of cars on the road are worsening the air pollution in my city, and more and more factories are adding to the air pollution."*

(Why poor? Should use pronouns to avoid repetition of "issue" and "air pollution")

Good answer: *"The main one is air pollution due to the increasing number of factories and cars on the road and the lack of an effective public transport system, which are causing dangerously high levels of toxins in the air."*

(Why good? Used the pronoun "one" and synonym "toxins in the air" to avoid repetition of "air pollution")

6. Don't overuse idioms

Using idioms inappropriately or unnaturally will negatively affect your vocabulary score. There is no need to artificially insert idiomatic expressions like "knee high to a grasshopper," or "escape the hustle and bustle of city life," unless they are clearly suitable as there are over 10,000 phrasal verbs in English, most of which are idiomatic expressions, such as "grow up."

Example: *"What was the best holiday you ever had in your country?"*

Poor answer: *"I remember when I was knee high to a grasshopper, to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and let our hair down, we went to Ocean Beach, which had a picture perfect white sandy beach with crystal clear waters."*

(Why poor? Unnatural and inappropriate use of idioms)

7. Try to avoid using memorized phrases or answers

Answers that are obviously memorized get a band score of 1. Answer each question as clearly and accurately as you can without giving memorized answers.

8. Don't give short answers

To get a band score 7 in fluency, you need to be able to give well explained answers with no noticeable effort.

Example: *"Have there been any changes in the places where people buy furniture nowadays?"*

Poor answer: *"Yes, many people are now buying online."*
(Why poor? Too short, no complex sentences and explanation)

Good answer: *"Definitely. The biggest development is in online furniture retailers, which offer more choice and cheaper prices, and, as well as this, there has been an increase in dedicated furniture stores, which are really big showrooms as opposed to regular department stores like Kmart."*

(Why good? Short answer, well explained, with a complex sentence and uncommon vocabulary)

Speaking - Part 2 + 3 Topics

A. What you do

- 14. School & Education (+ Opinion questions).....99
- 15. Work (+ Opinion questions).....105

B. Where you live

- 16. Apartments & Houses (+ Opinion questions).....110
- 17. Hometown & Neighbourhood (+ Opinion questions).....116

C. People

- 18. Family (+ Compare questions).....121
- 19. Friends & Relationships (+ Compare questions).....127

D. Places

- 20. Buildings (+ Compare questions).....133
- 21. Parks & Gardens (+ Compare questions).....139
- 22. Seas, Lakes & Rivers (+ Advantage/Disadvantage questions).....144

E. General

- 23. Animals & Pets (+ Advantage/Disadvantage questions).....149
- 24. Arts & Culture (+ Advantage/Disadvantage questions).....154
- 25. Books (+ Problem/Solution questions).....159
- 26. Festivals & Celebrations (+ Problem/Solution questions).....164
- 27. Films (+ Problem/Solution questions).....169
- 28. Food & Cooking (+ Why questions).....174
- 29. Hobbies & Interests (+ Why questions).....179
- 30. Humour & Laughing (+ Future questions).....184
- 31. Internet & Computers (+ Future questions).....189
- 32. News Sites & Newspapers (+ Future questions).....195
- 33. Music (+ Opinion questions).....200
- 34. Plants (+ Opinion questions).....205
- 35. Shopping (+ Opinion questions).....210
- 36. Sport & Exercise (+ Opinion questions).....215
- 37. Travel & Holidays (+ Compare questions).....220
- 38. Weddings (+ Compare questions).....227

School & Education

Key Vocabulary

- ☐ **took up**/got into/started
- ☐ **on average**/usually around/roughly/approximately
- ☐ quite interested in/passionate about/keen on/**really into**
- ☐ gaming/the piano/music/ swimming/scuba-diving/surfing/photography/collecting cartoon cards
- ☐ offline<>**online activities** (surf the net/check out-look at Facebook/gaming)
- ☐ **pastime**/free time
- ☐ **to keep fit**/active/do exercise/work out
- ☐ **to unwind**/relieve stress/chill out/relax
- ☐ to enjoy nature/**get outdoors**/get into nature
- ☐ like to **kick back** and (read a book)
- ☐ **hang out**/hook up/catch up with my friends/socialize
- ☐ like to **fiddle around**/play **with** (electronics/woodwork)
- ☐ what I find mentally challenging/**stimulating**/**entertaining**/interesting/rewarding/fun
- ☐ what's inspiring/uplifting/revitalising/**feel alive**
- ☐ **amazing**/**fascinating**
- ☐ **adrenaline pumping**/heart racing/**energizing**

Vocabulary Builder

A. Match the words to a synonym, antonym, or idiom.

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. took up | catch up |
| 2. passionate about | energizing |
| 3. keep fit | relax |
| 4. unwind | free time |
| 5. enjoy nature | entertaining |
| 6. hang out | got into |
| 7. fiddle | play |
| 8. stimulating | get outdoors |
| 9. heart racing | really into |
| 10. pastime | do exercise |

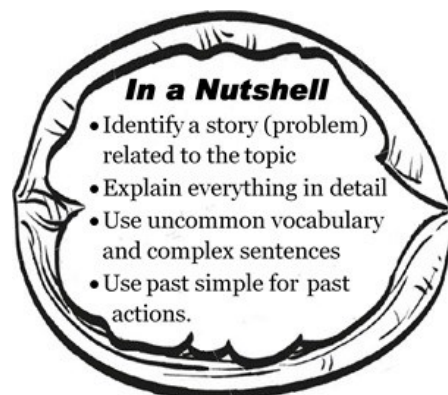
B. Circle the odd word/s out.

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. skateboarding | gaming | gardening |
| 2. internet junkie | cinemagoer | movie buff |
| 3. gave up | took up | got into |
| 4. interested in | detest | passionate about |
| 5. keep fit | relax | exercise |
| 6. pastime | unwind | chill out |
| 7. work out | enjoy nature | get outdoors |
| 8. hang out | fiddle around | catch up |
| 9. tiring | stimulating | rewarding |
| 10. adrenaline pumping | interesting | energizing |

Additional Vocabulary

- music/history/arts buff
- internet junkie/surf the net
- amateur photographer/writer/film maker
- cinemagoer/movie buff
- once in a blue moon
- distraction/fight boredom
- recover
- calming/therapeutic
- weekends
- on my bucket list
- cook
- travel
- golf/football/tennis/basketball/badminton/swimming
- paint
- chess/cards
- video/online games
- photography
- fish/hunt
- wood carving
- yoga

School & Education



Approach

State setting, describe topic, and tell 1-2 stories related to it.

One Minute Preparation - identify a story (problem) related to the topic

Write down:

1. main verb tense
2. uncommon words and ideas to describe the topic + story related to it.

Describe a school that you are attending or attended in the past.

Setting (where/when/who/what)

- When I was in the sixth grade,
- I remember when I was 12 years old,
- I remember the time when...
- Around six years ago,
- As far back as I can remember,

Description

- appearance
- characteristics
- special qualities

Story 2

- important events?
- problem/difficulty/challenge?
- solution?
- outcome/result?
- feelings

Story 1

- important events?
- problem/difficulty/challenge?
- solution?
- outcome/result?
- feelings

Ideas

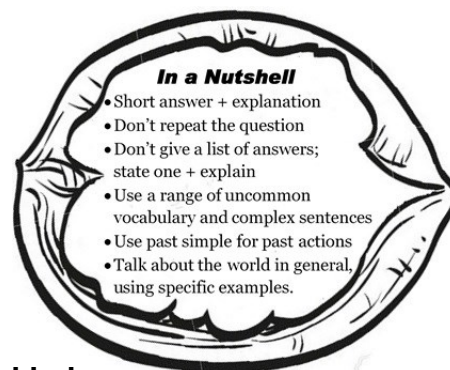
- Story:
 - What happened - important events from start to finish?
 - Problem/difficulty/challenge?
 - Things done to solve problem?
 - Solution?
 - Outcome/result?
 - Feelings?
 - Lesson learnt?
- Earliest memory
- Highlights
- Disappointments
- Why particularly liked it
- What didn't appeal

Ex. Elementary school/was often punished

Vocabulary

- **second/final year** high school student
- **undergraduate**<>graduate
- **attending**/studying at
- **bachelor/master's degree**
- **curriculum**/syllabus
- **compulsory** subjects/core subjects
- **extra-curricular activities**/school club/sports
- learn a lot of **theoretical**<>**practical knowledge**
- highly/**well qualified teacher**/ professors
- inspiring/**stimulating learning environment**
- high standard of education/**high academic standards**
- **heavy**<>**light workload**
- outdated<>**modern academic and sports facilities**/grounds
- **after school classes**/intensive classes
- homework/**assignments**
- local university//higher/tertiary education
- semester/term
- **practical experience**/skills
- develop interpersonal/**social skills**
- **broaden students' horizons**/expand knowledge
- develop **critical thinking skills**
- **science lab**/school facilities
- **studious**/conscientious
- well-disciplined/**diligent**/hard-working
- self-driven/self-starter
- **qualification**/degree
- **ultimate goal**/realise my dream of
- **job prospects**/market
- Positives & Negatives**
- + high standard of education/**high academic standards**
- + **curriculum** provides a good balance of **theoretical** and **practical skills**
- **deadlines**
- disruptive students
- commit suicide
- **parental pressure**
- **busy/long schedule**/timetable

School & Education



Answer the questions, using the structures indicated below.

Study habits

1. *Why can it be difficult for people to focus on studying?*
While **there are many** possible distractions, I'd say the main one is the **smartphone** since it presents people with so many things to look at, from social media sites like Facebook to the world of news and entertainment right at their fingertips.
(while + two different answers + reasons + examples)
2. *Why do you think some school teachers use competitions as class activities?*
(while + two different answers + reasons + examples)
3. *How important is it to take breaks while studying?*
Ideally, it's good to have a **rest every couple of hours** as it can freshen up your mind and having a drink or something to eat can boost your energy levels.
(short answer + reason + example)
4. *How important is it for a teacher to make a class interesting for students?*
(short answer + reason + example)
5. *Is it important to have a regular time for studying?*
By and large, **yes**, because if we set a clear time to do so, we will probably do it, whereas if we don't, we may never get around to doing it.
(short answer + because if + whereas if)
6. *Is it important that children are given homework?*
(short answer + because if + whereas if)

Different ways of studying

1. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying with other students?*
I'd say the key benefit is it can enable one to have a **better understanding** of a subject as explaining to someone else is a great way to deepen your own understanding, while there's a danger that it could turn into a **social event** where very little study occurs if some don't take it seriously.
(main advantage + reason + while + main disadvantage + reason)
2. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of going to university?*
(main advantage + reason + while + main disadvantage + reason)

3. *How important is it for students to vary the way in which they study (books/practical work)?*

It's crucial because if they only learn by reading theory and don't have any real world practical knowledge, it can make it difficult for them to fully understand the theory they are studying.

(short answer + because if)

4. *How important is technology in the classroom?*

(short answer + because if)

5. *Do you think studying online is as effective as studying with a teacher in a classroom?*

No, since, although the **internet can provide a lot of knowledge** and understanding, it's the **teacher who focuses their minds** on what they specifically need to learn and hopefully enables them to fully comprehend what they're learning.

(short answer + since although + difference + contrasting difference)

6. *Do you think private universities are better than public universities?*

(short answer + since although + difference + contrasting difference)

Part 3 Questions

“Opinion”

These ask for your opinion on a variety of different questions.

Examples

- How can language classes be made more interesting?
- Is family important in your country?
- Do you think we meet different kinds of friends at different stages of our lives?
- What kinds of things do children learn to do when they are very young?

A. Short answer + reason + example

Starting phrase	+ Answer	+ Reason	+ Example
I think	_____	because	like
I believe	_____	since	such as
I guess	_____	as	For example,
I suppose	_____	for	For instance,
I'd say	_____	given	as was the case with
As I see it	_____	owing to	A good example...
Probably	_____	due to	A good case in point...
Possibly/Maybe	_____		
Well/Actually	_____		

Agree

Yes/I agree
For sure/Definitely
Absolutely/Of course
I guess so/I suppose so/No question

Disagree

No/Not at all/I disagree
I'm not so sure/I'm not sure about that
I don't think so/Not necessarily

Question 1: Is family important in your country?

Answer: **Most definitely**, since around the world many families often rely on each other to survive and live together in extended families, supporting each other financially by, for example, sharing accommodation costs and other things like education.

Practice

1. How can language classes be made more interesting? I'd say the best thing is to incorporate different media that can...
2. Is family important in your country? Absolutely, since...
3. Do you think we meet different kinds of friends at different stages of our lives?
4. What kinds of things do children learn to do when they are very young?

Appendices

A. Common grammatical errors.....	233
B. Complex sentences	234
C. Advice for low level English speakers.....	235
D. Answer key for speaking - parts 1 + 2 (gap fill questions).....	236
E. Additional speaking - part 2 topics	241
F. Eight types of speaking - part 1 questions	247
G. Six types of speaking - part 3 questions.....	266
H. IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors.....	279

Common Grammatical Errors

Frequent grammatical errors, will prevent you from getting a band score 7 in grammar.

The most common grammatical errors I have noticed conducting IELTS speaking tests are as follows:

1. **Verb tense**

Using present simple instead of past simple to describe events that happened at a specific time in the past is a very common grammatical error.

Mainly use past simple to describe past events.

Example: I went to the Italy last year.

2. **Subject-verb agreement**

Many candidates don't match the subject with the correct form of the verb.

He/She/It + plural form of verb. I/You/We/They + singular form of verb.

Example 1: He goes to the cinema once a month.

Example 2: They need to reduce vehicle emissions.

3. **Countable nouns**

Many candidates incorrectly use the singular form of countable nouns when referring to them in general.

Use the plural form of countable nouns when referring to them in general.

Example 1: The main benefit of electric cars is...

Example 2: Governments need to reduce the number of private vehicles on the roads.

B

Complex Sentences

To get a band score 7 in grammar, in both speaking and writing, candidates need to use a range of complex sentences.

What are complex sentences?

They are two clauses, a dependent and an independent clause, joined by a subordinating conjunction.

Example

I went to the beach yesterday since it was such a beautiful day.

subordinating conjunction

independent clause

dependent clause

Why are complex sentences rated highly in IELTS?

It is for two key reasons:

1. The clauses can be switched around, depending on which clause you want to emphasize by placing it at the front of the sentence.

Example

I went to the beach yesterday since it was such a beautiful day.

Since it was such a beautiful day, I went to the beach yesterday.

2. Given there are many subordinating conjunctions, you can express a lot using complex sentences.

Subordinating conjunctions

before	by the time	though	providing
after	till	whereas	unless
as	until	while	as long as
since	as soon as	as a result of	so long as
because	ever since	because	at the same time
given	following	due to	whether or not
every time	later	in order to	that
the first time	once	resulting from	where
second time	although	resulting in	who
next time	despite the fact	even if	whose
last time	even though	if	whom
when	in spite of	in case	what
whenever	instead of	provided that	which