

Introduction

These include:

- Reading and understanding written academic or training language
- Writing assignments in an appropriate style for university study or within a training context
- Listening to and comprehending spoken language in both lecture format as well as formal and informal conversational style
- Speaking to colleagues and lecturers on general and given topics in formal and informal situations

Description of the test

There are two versions of the IELTS test:

Academic Module for students seeking entry to a university or institution of higher education offering degree and diploma courses	General Training Module for students seeking entry to a secondary school or to vocational training courses
---	--

***Note:** All candidates must take a test for each of the four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. All candidates take the same Listening and Speaking modules but may choose between the Academic or General Training versions of the Reading and Writing sections of the test. You should seek advice from a teacher or a student adviser if you are in any doubt about whether to sit for the Academic modules or the General Training modules. The two do not carry the same weight and are not interchangeable.*

Test format

Listening 4 sections, around 40 questions 30 minutes + transfer time

Academic Reading 3 sections, around 40 questions 60 minutes OR **General Training Reading** 3 sections, around 40 questions 60 minutes

Academic Writing 2 tasks 60 minutes OR **General Training Writing** 2 tasks 60 minutes

Speaking 10 to 15 minutes

Total test time 2 hours 45 minutes

WHAT DOES THE TEST CONSIST OF?

The Listening Module

Requirements	Situation types	Question types
<p>You must listen to four separate sections and answer questions as you listen. You will hear the tape <i>once only</i>.</p> <p>There will be between 38 and 42 questions. The test will take about 30 minutes. There will be time to read the questions during the test and time to transfer your answers on to the answer sheet at the end of the test.</p> <p>The level of difficulty of the texts and tasks increases through the paper.</p>	<p>The first two sections are based on social situations. There will be a conversation between two speakers and then a monologue.</p> <p>The second two sections are related to an educational or training context. There will be a conversation with up to four speakers and a lecture or talk of general academic interest.</p>	<p>You will meet a variety of question types which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · multiple choice · short answer questions · sentence completion · notes/summary/flow chart/table completion · labelling a diagram which has numbered parts · matching

Academic Reading Module

Requirements	Types of material	Question types
<p>You must read three reading passages with a total of 1 500 to 2 500 words.</p> <p>There will be between 38 and 42 questions. You will have 60 minutes to answer all the questions.</p> <p>The level of difficulty of the texts and tasks increases through the paper.</p>	<p>Magazines, journals, textbooks and newspapers.</p> <p>Topics are not discipline specific but all are in a style appropriate and accessible to candidates entering postgraduate and undergraduate courses.</p>	<p>You will meet a variety of question types which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple choice • short answer questions • sentence completion • notes/summary/flow chart/table completion • choosing from a bank of headings • identification of writer`s views or attitudes (Yes/ No/ Not given) • classification • matching lists • matching phrases

Introduction

Requirements	Task types
<p>You must complete two writing tasks. You will have 60 minutes to complete both tasks.</p> <p>You should spend about 20 minutes on Task 1 and write at least 150 words.</p> <p>You should spend about 40 minutes on Task 2 and write at least 250 words.</p>	<p><i>Task 1</i></p> <p>You will have to look at a diagram, a table or short piece of text and then present the information in your own words.</p> <p>Your writing will be assessed on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• organise, present and compare data• describe the stages of a process• describe an object or event• explain how something works <p>You will also be judged on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• answer the question without straying from the topic• write in a way which allows your reader to follow your ideas• use English grammar and syntax accurately• use appropriate language in terms of register, style and content <p><i>Task 2</i></p> <p>You will have to present an argument or discuss a problem.</p> <p>Your writing will be assessed on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• present the solution to a problem• present and justify an opinion• compare and contrast evidence and opinions• evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or an argument <p>You will also be judged on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• communicate an idea to the reader in an appropriate style• address the problem without straying from the topic• use English grammar and syntax accurately• use appropriate language in terms of register, style and content

General Training Reading Module

Requirements	Types of material	Question types
<p>You must answer questions on three sections of increasing difficulty with a total of 1,500 to 2,500 words.</p> <p>There will be between 38 and 42 questions. You will have 60 minutes to answer all the questions.</p> <p>The level of difficulty of the texts and tasks increases through the paper.</p>	<p>Notices, advertisements, booklets, newspapers, leaflets, timetables, books and magazine articles.</p> <p><i>Section 1</i> Social survival — retrieving factual information</p> <p><i>Section 2</i> Training survival — language in a training context</p> <p><i>Section 3</i> General reading — extended prose with emphasis on descriptive and instructive texts of general interest</p>	<p>You will meet a variety of question types, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multiple choice • short answer questions • sentence completion • notes/summary/flow chart/table completion • choosing from a bank of headings • identification of writer's views or attitudes (Yes/No/Not given) • classification • matching lists • matching phrases

General Training Writing Module

Requirements	Task types
<p>You must complete two writing tasks. You will have 60 minutes to complete both tasks.</p> <p>You should spend about 20 minutes on Task 1 and write at least 150 words.</p>	<p><i>Task 1</i></p> <p>You will have to write a short letter in response to a given problem or situation.</p> <p>Your writing will be assessed on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• engage in personal correspondence• elicit and provide general factual information• express needs, wants, likes and dislikes• express opinions <p>You will also be judged on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• answer the question without straying from the topic• write in a way which allows your reader to follow your ideas• use English grammar and syntax accurately• use appropriate language in terms of register, style and content
<p>You should spend about 40 minutes on Task 2 and write at least 250 words.</p>	<p><i>Task 2</i></p> <p>You will have to present an argument or discuss a problem.</p> <p>Your writing will be assessed on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide general factual information• outline a problem and present a solution• present and justify an opinion <p>You will also be judged on your ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• communicate an idea to the reader in an appropriate style• address the problem without straying from the topic• use English grammar and syntax accurately• use appropriate language in terms of register, style and content

The Speaking Module

Requirements	Assessment criteria
<p>You will have to talk to an examiner for about 15 minutes. The interview will be recorded. It is in 5 parts:</p> <p>1 Introduction — Basic introductions</p> <p>2 Extended discourse — You will talk at some length about general topics of relevance or interest which will involve explanation and description.</p> <p>3 Elicitation — You will be given a cue card which describes a situation or problem. You must ask the examiner questions to obtain information.</p> <p>4 Speculation and attitudes — You will be asked to talk about your plans or proposed course of study. You should demonstrate your ability to speculate or defend a point of view.</p> <p>5 Conclusion — The interview comes to an end.</p>	<p>You will be assessed on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to communicate effectively • ability to use appropriate vocabulary and structures • ability to ask questions • ability to take initiative in a conversation • general fluency • structural accuracy • intelligibility

How is IELTS scored?

IELTS provides a profile of your ability to use English. In other words your IELTS result will consist of a score in each of the four skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking) which is then averaged to give the Overall Band Score or final mark. Performance is rated in each skill on a scale of 9 to 1. The nine overall Bands and their descriptive statements are as follows:

9 Expert user

Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

8 Very good user

Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

Introduction

7 Good user

Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

6 Competent user

Has generally effective command of the language despite inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

5 Modest user

Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

4 Limited user

Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

3 Extremely limited user

Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

2 Intermittent user

No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

1 Non user

Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

0 Did not attempt the test

No assessable information provided.

What is the pass mark?

There is no fixed pass mark in IELTS. The institution you want to enter will decide whether your score is appropriate for the demands of the course of study or training you want to undertake. However, as a general rule, scores below Band 5 in any one skill are considered too low for academic

study; scores above Band 6 are deemed to be adequate to good. Overall Band scores of 5 or 6 are borderline and may not be acceptable at many institutions. If you are getting only about half of the questions in these sample tests correct, then you are probably not quite ready to take the IELTS test. Again you should seek advice from a teacher about your level of English. Remember you must allow a duration of at least 3 months between each attempt at the test.

For further information about the test, see the IELTS Handbook available from all test centres and also from UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), from IDP Education Australia and from British Council Centres.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The tests in this book are similar in length, format and content to the real test, but success in these tests will not guarantee success in the real test. It often seems easier to work on practice materials than to sit the tests themselves because you are not under the same pressure.

Timing

In order to maximise your use of these tests, you should make a note of the time it takes you to answer each of the sections. As you progress through the book, be stricter with yourself about the time you allow yourself to complete the sections.

Answer sheets

When you sit for the real IELTS test, you will have answer sheets on which to write your answers. A sample of these is given at the end of this book. To help you prepare for the test, we suggest that you write your answers on separate sheets of paper, rather than in the book itself.

Answer keys

Listening

In addition to the answer key, you will find tapescripts for all of the listening passages. These have been annotated to show where in the text the answer to each question can be found. There is very often a signpost word which will cue your listening. Look out for these signposts. Remember, the answers are usually short and never more than three words. Read the questions carefully, in the time provided on the tape, before you listen to each section of the tape.

Introduction

Reading

You will meet a number of different question types in the IELTS test. It is a useful strategy to become familiar with them and learn how best to approach them. The answer keys at the back of this book not only provide you with the answer to each question, but also give a suggested approach to each type of question, so take the time to work through them carefully.

Writing

You will find four sample answers to the writing tasks, one for each task type on each module. These have been included to give you an *idea* of the type of writing expected. However, there will be alternative approaches to each question and the model answers given should not be seen as prescriptive. Look carefully at the description of the writing test (given above in the Introduction) to see exactly which criteria you should be paying attention to in each task.

Speaking

The sample speaking tasks are to help you prepare for part 3 of the Speaking test. Remember that the examiner will expect you to show how much English you know and it is up to you to demonstrate that. You are expected to ask a lot of questions in part 3 and the examiner will not speak very much and may even appear to be “unhelpful” at times, to encourage you to ask more questions. The sample speaking tasks include suggested examiner’s prompts so that you can see how the interaction might unfold. It may be a useful preparation strategy to work with a friend and practise the interview format in this way, using the sample tasks in the book.