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Tips for **IELTS** Speaking

Academic/General Training Module by Adam Smith

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The **instagram** page contains lessons that show how to use the ideas from this book. You can keep in touch with the author there and ask your questions.

What is IELTS Speaking?

The IELTS Speaking Test is the final part of the exam. Your test will usually be at some time between 1.30pm and 5.00pm. You can take only your ID document into the exam room.

The test lasts between 11 and 14 minutes. You will be interviewed by an examiner who will record your conversation. Timing is strictly controlled by the examiner, so do not be surprised if he or she interrupts you during an answer.

There are 3 parts to the Speaking Test:

1. Introduction/ interview: around 10 questions in 4 to 5 minutes.
2. Short presentation: talk for 2 minutes with 1 minute to prepare.
3. Discussion: around 5 questions in 4 to 5 minutes.

Preparation is the key to a good score in IELTS Speaking. Different skills are tested in each part, so you need to know exactly what to do.

We can predict the kinds of questions that the examiner will ask. We will prepare ideas, possible answers and good vocabulary for each part of the test.

Which part is the most important?

Do the 3 parts of the speaking test carry equal weighting when your score is calculated, or is one part more important?

The simple answer is that the 3 parts are not scored separately; the examiner rates the student's performance as a whole. In this sense, neither part is more important. However, it's useful to think about the 3 parts like this:

- Part 1 is supposed to be quite easy (like a warm-up), so you won't get a high score if you **only** do well in this part.
- Part 2 is when the examiner really gets a chance to assess how good you are. He/she will now have an idea of what scores to give you.
- During part 3, the examiner is making his/her final decision. A good performance here can boost your score.

If you don't understand, ...

What should you do if you don't understand a question in the speaking test?
Here are my tips:

Part 1

In part 1, the examiner is not allowed to help you, but he/she can repeat the question. Just say: "Sorry, can you repeat the question please?" If you still don't understand the second time, try to say something related to the topic or any of the words that you heard. Try your best, then focus on the next question.

Part 2

You are given a task card with the question written on it, so you shouldn't have any problems in this part. If there is a word that you don't understand on the task card, don't ask the examiner - he/she is not allowed to help.

Part 3

In this part of the test, the examiner is allowed to rephrase the question. If you don't understand, just say something like: "Sorry, can you explain that question in a different way please?"

Tips for the Speaking Test

Many people agree that the secret of success in the Speaking test is being confident and creative person. Does it mean that others will fail? Not at all! This test is PREDICTABLE. Use the following tips to prepare yourself to what's coming and the confidence will come.

What are they looking for?

If you know what is important to IELTS examiners, it improves your chances of success. These guidelines refer to every part of the Speaking test. Stick to them and you will satisfy your examiner.

- Speak without long pauses (when you are trying to think of something to say)
- Understand what the examiner asks you and confirm that by answering accordingly.
- Demonstrate how many "smart" words you know.

- Use all the tenses when you speak - past, present, future – and use them correctly.
- Pronounce the words correctly. For example the word “culture” should sound like “kolcher”, not “kultur”.
- Important! Accent has nothing to do with pronunciation, so it will not affect your score.

Keep it simple!

This tip refers to the whole Speaking test. Don't start long and complicated sentences if you don't know how to finish them! Keep your sentences simple, and words - understandable. If you make grammatical error – it's ok to correct yourself, but don't overdo it, you must sound fluent.

When you hear a question, your mind automatically draws an image with the answer. You can describe this image in your own language, but when you start to describe it in English, suddenly you don't have enough words in your vocabulary. So try to think of what part of that image you can describe, do it and stop there. Don't let yourself show what words you don't know by saying incomplete sentences.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: Interview

The first part of the Speaking test is the Interview. You enter the room, see the examiner, say “Good morning!” and smile. He or she asks to see your passport and to sit down. If he/she offers to shake your hand – do it, otherwise – don't.

Your body language is important here, it must show that you are relaxed and confident. When you are talking, try to make eye contact with the examiner as much as you can. During the interview the examiner asks you questions about yourself, your work, studies, parents, brothers/sisters, pets, etc. Your answer to each question should consist of one or two sentences; try not to answer with just “Yes” or “No”. After all it's your English they want to hear.

This is an easy task to prepare for. Read carefully the following questions and answers, and you will get a very clear picture of what will happen.

Possible questions and answers

1. *Where do you come from?*

I live in Panvilles village. It is a big small town located in the south of the Netherlands.

2. *What is your home like?*

I rent an apartment. We have two bedrooms, one living room, one kitchen and of course one restroom. The apartment is not very big, about 70 square meters.

3. *What the advantages and disadvantages your home has?*

The advantage is that my accommodation has lots of sunlight from the windows. And the disadvantage is that it is noisy because the centre of the city is nearby.

4. *Tell me about your family.*

I have a mother, a father and a brother. My mother is a social worker, my father is a civil engineer and my brother is a student.

5. *Tell me about your job.*

Well, I work for a small company named BananaSoft. It is located in Smallvile. My job title is Software Designer.

6. *Is there anything you dislike about your job?*

Normally, I enjoy my job very much. But sometimes my boss gives me boring assignments, which I don't like at all.

7. *What are your plans for the future?*

I would like to improve my English first and then to find another job with better salary.

8. *What type of transport do you use most?*

There are 2 types of transport that I use: I either drive my car or take the bus.

9. *Do you like reading?*

Yes I do. I enjoy reading very much. Usually, I read every other day of the week.

10. What do you like reading the best?

I enjoy reading newspapers, magazines and of course my favorite fantasy books.

11. What kind of television programs do you watch?

Well, my favorite channel is Some TV Channel. I find it very interesting and educational.

12. Tell me about a film you have seen recently

I saw "Some New Movie" a week ago. It is a comedy and I like comedies. This one has some silly jokes but other than that I enjoyed it.

13. Do you have a pet?

Yes I do. I have a dog named Richy. He is 4 years old.

14. What kind of food do you like?

I prefer Asian cooking, mostly Chinese. My favorite dish is noodles with vegetables.

15. How often do you go shopping?

Well, I don't like shopping, so I do it only when I have to.

16. What is your favorite festival and why?

I like October Fest. It's a German festival that starts in late September and ends in October. People drink lots of beer at October Fest and that is why I like it.

17. How do people celebrate this festival?

Well, they build pavilions and stands that sell beer and all kinds of food, a lot of bands are playing there. People from all around Europe come to celebrate the October Fest dressed in German Traditional clothes.

Giving short and simple answers

The first part of the IELTS Speaking Test lasts around 4 to 5 minutes. The examiner asks about 10 questions related to you, your daily life and your interests. Common topics are hobbies, family, friends, food, music etc.

Part 1 questions are supposed to be easy, and the examiner must get through all of the questions in 5 minutes or less. That's only about 30 seconds per question. If you try to give long answers, the examiner will interrupt you. My advice is to keep Part 1 answers very simple:

Do you prefer home-cooked food or food from restaurants?

I prefer home-cooked food because I think it's healthier and you know exactly what you're eating. I also enjoy cooking for family and friends.

You don't need to say any more than this. Just answer the question with a full sentence, give a reason, and maybe add one extra piece of information. Then stop speaking. *Stop with confidence and look at the examiner, ready for the next question.*

Do you work or are you a student?

These are common questions at the start of the speaking test:

1. Do you work or are you a student?
2. Do you like your job / course? Why / why not?

Example answers:

1. Before I came to England I was working as an accountant, but at the moment I'm studying English because I hope to do a Master's here.
2. Yes, I really like my job because it's interesting and I work with a great team of people. **OR:** Yes, I enjoy studying English, but my real aim is to do a Master's and then find a job in an international company.

Note: Don't ask the examiner: "Do you mean in my country or here in England?" - it doesn't matter. Don't worry if you have a job and study at the same time - you can mention both.

Have a look at the answers below. It is a good example of how to do IELTS Speaking Part 1.

Remember, Part 1 is supposed to be easy. You should give short, simple answers. The speaker speaks clearly, answers the questions directly, and doesn't hesitate before answering. Her answers sound natural and she makes almost no mistakes.

Here are the first 4 questions and answers:

Do you work or are you a student?

I work and I'm studying English as well.

And what's your job?

I work in hairdressing and I do manicure, I do nails. I work part-time.

How long have you done this job?

I've been doing this job for almost one year.

Do you like it?

Actually, I don't like it very much. The part that I like is that I can communicate with people.

Answering the topics you are not interested in

How do you answer questions about a topic that you are not interested in? For example, many people have no interest in dancing, so what should they say?

The best advice: just tell the truth. It's fine to say you don't like something. Read the examples below:

1. Do you like dancing?

No, I don't like dancing. I'm not a big music fan, and dancing just makes me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious.

2. Has anyone ever taught you to dance?

No, I've never been interested in learning to dance, so I've never taken any lessons or asked anyone to show me how to do it.

3. Do you think that traditional dancing will be popular in the future?

I'm afraid I have no idea because I don't follow what's happening in the dancing world! I suppose it will always be popular with some people.

5 Simple Rules

Part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test is supposed to be easy. You don't need to give 'difficult' answers, and you should try to avoid making mistakes.

Here are five simple rules for Speaking Part 1:

1. Keep your answers short, then stop with confidence.
2. Answer the questions using full sentences.
3. Use words from the examiner's question in your answer.
4. If possible, give a reason for your answer.
5. Don't forget to say "yes" or "no" when necessary.

Here's an example to illustrate these points:

Do you like parks?

Yes, I like parks because they are great places to relax. If you live in a city, a park is often the only place where you can escape from the noise and the traffic.

Common Part 1 Topics

'Neighbors' topic

1. *How well do you know your next-door neighbours?*

I know my neighbours quite well. They're really nice people, and I always stop to talk whenever I see them. I think it's important to get on well with the people who live next door.

2. *How often do you see them?*

I see my neighbours at least a few times a week. We usually see each other when we're leaving for work in the morning or coming home in the evening.

3. *What problems do people sometimes have with their neighbours?*

I think the most common problem is probably noise. It's difficult to live next to people who have a dog that barks at night, or who play loud music or have too many parties.

'Houses and apartments' Topics

1. **Do you live in a house or an apartment?**

I live in a semi-detached house with three bedrooms in a suburb of Manchester. I've lived there for just over a year.

2. **Which is your favourite room in your home? Why?**

I don't really have a favourite room. But if I had to choose, I'd say the living room because that's where I go to sit and relax.

3. **Would you change anything about your home? Why / why not?**

Yes, I've been meaning to redecorate it since I moved in last year. It needs a new kitchen, so that's what I'd change first.

4. **Would you like to move to a different home in the future?**

Yes, I'd definitely move again at some point if I could afford to. I'd like to live in the countryside, or maybe in a different city or country.

'Numbers' Topic

1. Do you have a favourite number or a number that is special to you?

Yes, my favourite number is... because it's the day I was born on, and it's my lucky number.

2. Do any numbers have special importance in your country?

Yes, certain ages are special. For example, your 18th birthday is important because it's when you are considered to become an adult.

3. Are you good at remembering numbers? Why / why not?

No, I'm not very good at remembering numbers. I don't think it's necessary to learn them by heart; I just save them on my phone.

4. What numbers do people often have to memorise?

The most important number to remember on a daily basis is the pin number for your bank card. Without this you can't pay for anything or get cash out.

'Hometown' Topics

1. Where are you from?

I'm from Manchester, which is a city in the north west of England.

2. Do you like your home town? (Why?)

Yes, I like living in Manchester because it's where most of my friends live, and because there are plenty of things to do there. The only thing I don't like is the weather.

3. Would you prefer to live somewhere else? (Why?)

For the moment I'm happy living here, but at some point I'd like to live in a country with a warmer climate, and I'd like to live near a beach!

4. Do you think your home town is a good place for young people? (Why?)



Yes, Manchester has lots of things for young people, such as sports facilities, music and cinemas.

'Friends' Topic

1. Are your friends mostly your age or different ages?

Most of my friends are about the same age as me because we met at school or university. I've got one or two friends who are older or younger than I met through work.

2. Do you usually see your friends during the week or at weekends?

I tend to meet up with my friends at weekends because everyone's too busy during the week.

3. The last time you saw your friends, what did you do together?

It was one of my friends' birthday last weekend. Six of us went out for a meal to celebrate.

4. In what ways are your friends important to you?

I think it's important to have friends that you can talk to and share experiences with. My friends make me laugh, but I know I can also rely on them whenever I need help or support.

'Reading' Topics

1. Do you like reading?

Yes, I like reading a lot. I read all sorts of things, including novels, newspapers, magazines, and online articles.

2. Do you usually read for leisure or for work purposes?

Well, I have to do a certain amount of reading as part of my job, but I probably read more for enjoyment. I pick up a newspaper most days, and I usually have a book on the go.

3. What was your favourite book or story when you were a child?