

Study Skills: Speaking

How much do you know about the IELTS Speaking module?

Do the quiz below to find out.

Quiz

1 How long is the Speaking module?

- A 15–20 minutes
- B 11–14 minutes
- C 40–45 minutes

2 There are three main parts of the Speaking module. Are these statements about the three Parts true or false?

Part 1

- 1 This Part lasts between four and five minutes.
- 2 The candidate is asked to describe a picture.
- 3 The candidate answers general questions about themselves, their families, their jobs and other familiar topics.

Part 2

- 4 The candidate is given a minute to prepare to talk about a topic.
- 5 The candidate is asked to talk about a topic for ten minutes.
- 6 The candidate must choose what topic they wish to discuss.

Part 3

- 7 This Part lasts between four and five minutes.
- 8 This Part is a discussion between the candidate and examiner on a topic related to Part 2
- 9 This is the easiest Part of the module.

Part 1

Talking about familiar topics

In Part 1 of the Speaking module, you have to answer questions about familiar topics. You can't know exactly what you will be asked, but you can prepare.

Look at the topics below. Write questions that the examiner might ask you about them. Then look at the suggestions on page 83.

- Your studies
- Your previous work experience, your current job or your future career plans
- Your family/home life
- Your country
- Your hobbies and interests

Giving a good answer

1 Read some possible questions and answers for Part 1. Tick the answers that you think are good.

A Examiner: Who was your favourite teacher at school? Why did you like their lessons?
Candidate: Mr Wallis. Because they were easy.

B Examiner: How long have you been studying English?
Candidate: I am very interested in English because it is a world language and I hope it will help me to do well in my career.

C Examiner: What do you do?
Candidate: Well, at the moment I'm studying full time, but back in my country I'm a doctor and I hope to be able to find work here as a doctor too.

D Examiner: What are the best things about your job?
Candidate: Oh, definitely the people. I love meeting people from all over the world.

E Examiner: Do you live with your family?
Candidate: No.

F Examiner: How long have you been in the UK?
Candidate: I will stay three years.

G Examiner: Tell me about where you are living at the moment.
Candidate: It is a, er, er, what is the word, er, er, maisonette!

H Examiner: Do you enjoy travelling?
Candidate: Yes, I'm really interested in seeing the world. While I've been living in Britain, I've also taken the opportunity to go to Europe and see France and Spain. I found the people in Spain really friendly.

2 How can you improve the other answers?

3 Now record yourself answering the same questions. Listen to the recording and evaluate your performance.

Useful language

At the moment I'm living/studying/working ...	It depends. Sometimes I like cooking, and sometimes I'm just too tired.
Before that I lived in ...	Definitely, I love it! It's ...
Recently, I've been to France/started playing football, etc. (note the use of the present perfect here)	Mmm, possibly. It depends on the weather really.
I'm planning to ...	Generally I think it's a good idea because ...
After that I'll probably ...	Well, it's very different because ...
I prefer (followed by a noun) Scotland because ...	Let me think/see, ...
I'd rather (followed by verb) live in Australia because ...	I'm not really sure, but perhaps ...
Both my father and mother ...	That's a good question/point. I suppose ...
Neither of my brothers ...	I haven't really given that much thought before but ...
None of my friends ...	


4 Write answers that are true for you to the questions below.

- 1 Why are you taking IELTS?
- 2 What are your ambitions?
- 3 Tell me about where you are living at the moment.
- 4 How would you describe your home town?
- 5 What do you usually do at the weekend?

Remember

- Make sure you answer the question.
- One-word answers are not acceptable.
- Always add some extra information to your answer.

Identifying strengths and weaknesses

1  23 Listen to a student answering the examiner's questions. What is good about their performance? How could it be improved? Use the checklist to help you and refer to the Recording script on page 93.

Checklist

- Does the student answer the questions correctly?
- Does she answer the questions fully, giving extra information?
- Is her grammar accurate?
- Does she use a range of vocabulary appropriately?
- Is it easy to understand her pronunciation?
- Does she use any words or phrases to make her language sound more natural, eg *Well, Actually, Oh definitely*, etc.?
- Does she sound fluent or does she often hesitate?

2 Now record yourself answering the same questions (see page 93 for the questions). Listen to the recording and evaluate your performance using the checklist above.

Planning your answer

In Part 2 of the Speaking module you have to speak for 1–2 minutes on a topic. You have one minute to think about this topic. Use this time well.

- 1** Read the sample question below. Underline the key words in the instructions.

Describe an occasion when you have been successful. You should say:

- where and when you were successful
- how you were successful
- what you had to do to make sure you were successful

and describe how you felt about your success.

- 2** Think of two or three things to say about each part of the question. You can make notes if you wish, but remember you only have **one** minute.

Giving extra information

It is important that you talk for long enough: minimum one minute and maximum two minutes. This means you have to think of extra information to give the examiner. You can do this in different ways by:

- saying why you think / feel something
- giving examples
- giving details

- 1** Read this sample question and underline the key words.


Talk about an important day in your life. You should say:

- when this day was
- if you were alone or with others
- where you were and what happened

and explain why this day was important to you.

- 2** Think of relevant things to say about each part of the question. Give examples and include details.

- 3** Use the different parts of the question to organize your answer, so that each part follows on logically from the one before.

- 4**  **24** Now listen to this student answering the question. Does he include all of the main points?

Remember

It is important to keep talking, but don't talk about things which are not related to the topic.

Useful language

The best/worst thing about ... is/was ...
The thing I really like(d)/hate(d) about ... is/was ...
One of the problems with ... is/was ...
I particularly remember ... because ...
I'll never forget ... because ...

5 Look at the *Useful language* box and practise answering the two sample questions. Time yourself to check your answers are the right length.

Describe a present someone gave you which was/is important to you.


You should say:

- what the present was
- who gave it to you
- why they gave it to you (eg to celebrate a birthday) and explain why it is so important to you.

Describe a friend who has played an important part in your life. You should say:

- how you met this person
- how long you have known them
- the kind of things you do or did with them and explain why they have been important in your life.

Identifying strengths and weaknesses

 **25** Listen to answers to the second sample question. Which one is a better answer? Why?

Follow-up questions


After you have spoken for 1–2 minutes, the examiner may ask you one or two follow-up questions about what you have said. For example:

Question	Answer	Follow-up question
How did you feel when you arrived in the UK?	I was very nervous because I didn't know anybody.	Did you find it easy to meet people?

1 Match the appropriate answers A–F to questions 1–6.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Do you enjoy playing sports? | A No, not really. It wasn't very good value for money. |
| 2 Would you like to go there again? | B I don't think so. It wasn't really for me. |
| 3 Do you think it will be easy to get a job in IT? | C I expect so. It's a growing industry. |
| 4 Have you ever been to any other countries in Europe? | D Yes, definitely. I particularly enjoy outdoor ones. |
| 5 Would you consider doing the same sort of job again? | E Possibly. It would depend on who I went with! |
| 6 Would you recommend the holiday to other people? | F Yes, a few. France, Spain and the Czech Republic. |

2  **26** Listen and check.

3  **26** Listen again and repeat the answers.

Part 3

Remember

- One-word answers are **not** acceptable.
- Always give a reason for your answer.

Expanding answers

In Part 3 of the Speaking module, you have to discuss questions related to the topic in Part 2 with the examiner. Although this is a discussion, you should do most of the talking. Sometimes the examiner will ask you questions which seem to need a one word answer. For example:

- 1 Is it a good idea to exercise regularly?
- 2 Is there more crime these days?
- 3 Do you think everyone should have a mobile phone?

1 Read the example questions above again. Write an answer for each including a reason.

2 Now add an extra sentence or two to each of your answers.

Linking ideas

1 The words and phrases in the box are all used to link ideas. Put them into the appropriate categories below.

on the other hand and so because however such as

Remember

Some linking words, such as *furthermore*, *nevertheless* and *consequently* are more appropriate for writing than speaking.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 the reason for something | 4 contrasting two ideas |
| 2 the result of something | 5 giving an example |
| 3 joining two ideas together | |

2 Look at the *Useful language* boxes and practise giving answers to questions 1–8 below.

Useful language: Comparing and contrasting

On the one hand ... on the other hand ...

Well, ... isn't as ... as ...

... is nowhere near as ... as ...

I'd rather ...

I'd much prefer (to) ...

It depends (on) ...

- 1 Do you think smoking will be banned in all public places?
- 2 Do you prefer to go out or stay at home in the evening?
- 3 Do you think that email has made our lives easier?
- 4 Which is better: living in the countryside or in the city?
- 5 Are qualifications important?
- 6 How likely is it that computers will be able to do your job in future?
- 7 Would you rather watch sport or play it?
- 8 What do you think the consequences of global warming will be?

Useful language: Making predictions/talking about the future

There's a good chance that ...

I doubt very much if ...

I hope that ...

I expect that ...

I'm afraid that ... (*this does not mean you feel fear, but is a way of talking about something negative, eg I'm afraid that a lot of smokers will complain, but ...*)

It's bound to (+ infinitive)

It is/isn't very likely to ...


Useful language: Giving opinions

As far as I'm concerned ...

It seems to me that ...

I can't help thinking that ... (*use this phrase when you think that people won't agree with you*)

I tend to think that ...

3  27 Now listen to students answering the eight questions above.

- Do they give full answers?
- Do they use a range of vocabulary?
- Are their answers grammatically correct?