**What is IELTS?**

The **International English Language Testing System** (IELTS) is designed to help you work, study or migrate to a country where English is the native language. This includes countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and USA. IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council; IDP IELTS; and Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

Your ability to listen, read, write and speak in English will be assessed during the test. IELTS is graded on a scale of 1-9. The minimum score required varies between 6 and 7.5, depending on the course and university. See this [website](https://www.getmyuni.com/uk/articles/ielts-requirements-for-uk-universities#minimum-ielts-score-requirements-to-study-in-the-uk) for more information.

**Why take IELTS?**

If you are looking to work, live or study in an English-speaking country, then you must be able to demonstrate a high level of English language ability.

English is the third most spoken language in the world, with 379 million speakers worldwide.

Being able to communicate in the native language of the country you wish to work or study in, has a wide range of benefits. It is also essential for job opportunities as well as integration into the community.

IELTS is the most popular test for those looking to migrate to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK. It is globally recognised by more than 11,000 employers, universities, schools and immigration bodies including 3,400 institutions in the USA.

**IELTS score scale**

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| **Band score** | **Skill level** | **Description** |
| 9 | Expert user | The test taker has fully operational command of the language. Their use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and shows complete understanding. |
| 8 | Very good user | The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. They may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. They handle complex and detailed argumentation well. |
| 7 | Good user | The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. They generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning. |
| 6 | Competent user | The test taker has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. They can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations. |
| 5 | Modest user | The test taker has a partial command of the language and copes with overall meaning in most situations, although they are likely to make many mistakes. They should be able to handle basic communication in their own field. |
| 4 | Limited user | The test taker's basic competence is limited to familiar situations. They frequently show problems in understanding and expression. They are not able to use complex language. |
| 3 | Extremely limited user | The test taker conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication. |
| 2 | Intermittent user | The test taker has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English. |

**There are two types of the IELTS test: IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training**. **The IELTS Academic test is for people applying for higher education or professional registration in an English-speaking environment. It reflects some of the features of academic language and assesses whether you are ready to begin studying or training.**

The IELTS General Training test is for those who are going to English speaking countries for secondary education, work experience or training programs. It is also a requirement for migration to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK. The test focuses on basic survival skills in broad social and workplace contexts. Listening and Speaking are the same for both tests, but the subject matter of the Reading and Writing sections differs depending on which test you take.

### **1. Listening (30 minutes)**

You will listen to four recordings of native English speakers and then write your answers to a series of questions.

* Recording 1 – a conversation between two people set in an everyday social context.
* Recording 2 – a monologue set in an everyday social context, e.g. a speech about local facilities.
* Recording 3 – a conversation between up to four people set in an educational or training context, e.g. a university tutor and a student discussing an assignment.
* Recording 4 – a monologue on an academic subject, e.g. a university lecture.

Assessors will be looking for evidence of your ability to understand the main ideas and detailed factual information, the opinions and attitudes of speakers, the purpose of an utterance and evidence of your ability to follow the development of ideas.

#### Task type 1 – Multiple choice

#### Task type 2 – Matching

#### Task type 3 – Plan, map, diagram labelling

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

#### Task type 5 – Sentence completion

#### Task type 6 – Short-answer questions

### **2. Reading (60 minutes): Academic**

The Reading section consists of 40 questions, designed to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical argument and recognising writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose.  
  
**IELTS Academic test**- this includes three long texts which range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. These are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers.  They have been selected for a non-specialist audience but are appropriate for people entering university courses or seeking professional registration.

**Paper format:** Three reading passages with a variety of questions using a number of task types.

**Timing:** 60 minutes

**No. of questions:**40

**Task types:**A variety of question types are used, chosen from the following; multiple choice, identifying information, identifying the writer’s views/claims, matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary completion, note completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, diagram label completion and short-answer questions.

**Sources:** Texts are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers, and have been written for a non-specialist audience. All the topics are of general interest. They deal with issues which are interesting, recognisably appropriate and accessible to test takers entering undergraduate or postgraduate courses or seeking professional registration. The passages may be written in a variety of styles, for example narrative, descriptive or discursive/argumentative. At least one text contains detailed logical argument. Texts may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms a simple glossary is provided.

**Answering:** Test takers are required to transfer their answers to an answer sheet during the time allowed for the test. No extra time is allowed for transfer. Care should be taken when writing answers on the answer sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalised.

**Sources:**The first section, ‘social survival’, contains texts relevant to basic

**3. Academic Writing (60 minutes)**

Topics are of general interest to, and suitable for, test takers entering undergraduate and postgraduate studies or seeking professional registration. There are two tasks:

* **Task 1**- you will be presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram and asked to describe, summarise or explain the information in your own words. You may be asked to describe and explain data, describe the stages of a process, how something works or describe an object or event.
* **Task 2** - you will be asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. Responses to both tasks must be in a formal style.

**Paper format:**There are two Writing tasks and BOTH must be completed.

**Timing:** 60 minutes

**No. of questions:**2

**Task types:**In Task 1, test takers are asked to describe some visual information (graph/table/chart/diagram) in their own words. They need to write 150 words in about 20 minutes. In Task 2, they respond to a point of view or argument or problem. They need to write 250 words in about 40 minutes.

**Answering:**Answers must be given on the answer sheet and must be written in full. Notes or bullet points are not acceptable as answers. Test takers may write on the question paper but this cannot be taken from the examination room and will not be seen by the examiner.

### **4. Speaking (11–14 minutes)**

The speaking section assesses your use of spoken English. Every test is recorded.

* **Part 1** - the examiner will ask you general questions about yourself and a range of familiar topics, such as home, family, work, studies and interests. This part lasts between four and five minutes.
* **Part 2**  - you will be given a card which asks you to talk about a particular topic. You will have one minute to prepare before speaking for up to two minutes. The examiner will then ask one or two questions on the same topic.
* **Part 3** - you will be asked further questions about the topic in Part 2. These will give you the opportunity to discuss more abstract ideas and issues. This part of the test lasts between four and five minutes.

**Paper format:**The Speaking test consists of an oral interview between the test takers' and an examiner. All Speaking tests are recorded.

**Timing:** 11–14 minutes

**Task types:** There are three parts to the test and each part fulfils a specific function in terms of interaction pattern, task input and test takers output.

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**Test fee (Paper): £195** *(IELTS online is not available in the UK)* For test centres (and to book a test), go to [Book a test (ielts.org)](https://www.ielts.org/for-test-takers/book-a-test)

*Information taken from the official IELTS website* [What is IELTS?](https://www.ielts.org/about-ielts/what-is-ielts)

*Sample test questions* [Sample test questions (ielts.org)](https://www.ielts.org/for-test-takers/sample-test-questions)

*Free practice tests online* [Free online IELTS practice tests | Take IELTS (britishcouncil.org)](https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/take-ielts/prepare/free-ielts-practice-tests)

*Practice tests and tips* [IELTSbuddy - Free exam preparation to improve your test score](https://www.ieltsbuddy.com/?fbclid=IwAR0TAmPu90dnkGa5zi-MLkGJt3L7e8M24odiFcZEEe-l9RYtyzJRBKbIyZE)