

12 tips for IELTS success

1. Answer IELTS listening questions in the order they appear on the question paper, looking only at the question that relate to the part being played. Remember that the questions normally follow the order of the information played in the recording.
2. Make sure you use the time in between sections to familiarise yourself with the questions so you can try and predict the information you will be listening out for, e.g. a time / date / place. If you are familiar with the questions you should be able to recognise if you have missed an answer so you can move on and listen for the next piece of information.
3. At the end of the recording you have time to transfer your answers to the answer sheet. Be sure to check your grammar and spelling because you will lose marks if you are inaccurate.
4. In IELTS academic reading you do not have long to read three texts so don't try to understand every word precisely. You may not be tested on that part of the text anyway.
5. Have a brief look at the questions before you read the text. It's always advisable to read with a purpose! For example, if one of the questions asks you to match paragraphs with headings, you can write a few words about what the paragraph deals with as you read to help you identify the correct heading.
6. The IELTS instructions might give you a word limit, e.g. 'use no more than 3 words.' Keep to this by avoiding unnecessary words in your answer. Articles, i.e. the/a/an, count as one word so if they are not needed for the sentence to make sense then leave them out.
7. In IELTS academic writing you must always keep to the topic of the question and answer it specifically. Don't try to prepare sections of an essay before the exam as this will be obvious to the examiner.
8. The best way to prepare for IELTS writing (task 2) is to read widely about current affairs and then practise writing sample IELTS questions. Read newspapers and magazines whenever you get the chance. This will help you to form ideas for your essays.
9. If you write less than 150 words for task 1 and 250 words for task 2 you will lose marks. There is no strict word limit for either task but try to stick to the suggested timing so hopefully you will have an opportunity to check your work for spelling and grammar.
10. In the IELTS speaking exam, don't prepare speeches on topics. You need to make sure you answer the specific question you are asked. Remember, you are not being tested on your general knowledge but on your ability to communicate well. Slow down and try to organise your ideas in a logical way.
11. When the examiner asks you a question try to give as much detail as possible. Explain at least one point and remember to give your opinion. The examiner wants to hear you talk so give him plenty of opportunity!
12. Plenty of practise answering IELTS exam questions is the best way to prepare for the exam. There are various books available with past IELTS questions and answer keys that will be a great help if you are planning on taking the exam soon.