# Teaching IELTS Preparation

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Course structure

This online course:

- takes a detailed look at the structure of the IELTS test and how it is delivered and assessed.
- discusses how to support students in their skills development for each section of the academic test, using sample activities that an IELTS preparation program might use.
- discusses how to set up a whole program with reference to available course books and materials.
- includes activities and self-assessment tasks throughout the course, which use authentic IELTS materials.
- includes an exam at the end.
Unit 1 – Introduction to IELTS

There are several internationally recognised English language tests used to establish the language level of people for entry into universities, employment and immigration visas, among other purposes. These tests have standardised bands or scales so that any person with a particular test score will have equivalent proficiency with any other person with the same score.

The main tests used for this purpose are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International English Language Testing System (IELTS)</th>
<th>IELTS is jointly owned by British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge English Language. We will discuss this test in detail in this course.</th>
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<td>• Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and • Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)</td>
<td>Administered by <a href="http://www.ets.org">www.ets.org</a>. TOEFL is a general English test while TOEIC is geared towards (general) business English. These tests stem from the USA, but are administered and accepted worldwide.</td>
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<td>Cambridge English tests</td>
<td>Some of the most popular tests of general English in the UK and also widely used in Language Colleges in Australia and Continental Europe. They are managed by Cambridge English (<a href="http://www.cambridgeenglish.org">www.cambridgeenglish.org</a>). Some of the Cambridge tests include: Cambridge English: Key (KET); Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET); Cambridge English: First (FCE); Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE); Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE).</td>
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<td>Other testing systems used for various purposes</td>
<td>For example, the GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) or the GRE (Graduate Record Examination), used for entry into graduate business programs.</td>
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The IELTS has become one of the most popular tests and is used by universities, employers, governments and other agencies. It has also become the most popular English testing system in China, which makes it significant for TESOL teachers working in Asia (there are IELTS testing centres springing up all over the country). Furthermore, while traditionally the test of choice in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, thousands of institutions and programs in the USA now accept IELTS scores as proof of English language skills.

There are IELTS test preparation courses as well as course books and materials for teachers and students available through the major publishers (Cambridge, Oxford and Pearson/Longman). A language college may have a preparation program running for 2 hours once a week for students planning to take the test, or it may have a more intensive course of preparation study, full time, over several weeks. Such courses would include skills development in each of the IELTS test areas: listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Although any institution may choose to run an IELTS preparation program, only licensed centres may deliver the IELTS test and only licensed examiners may examine students and assess them. Official IELTS testing centres will, from time to time, train examiners for this purpose.

For the clearest and most accurate description of the IELTS, the IELTS Information for Candidates and the IELTS Guide for Teachers cannot be outdone. Download both of these documents from Unit 1 – Introduction to IELTS online and complete the assessment task in Unit 1 Activities online.
IMPORTANT! [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org) contains a wealth of updated information regarding IELTS. In this course, we focus on the IELTS test from the perspective of a teacher preparing students for the test, but the IELTS website also contains information for students, organisations and researchers. Make sure you have a good look!
Unit 1 – Activities

Make sure you have studied the IELTS Information for Candidates and the IELTS Guide for Teachers and choose the best answer for each question (answers are based on the information in these documents. You can download these documents from Unit 1 – Introduction to IELTS online).

IELTS Information for Candidates

1. IELTS is offered in at least:
   (a) 25 countries
   (b) 50 countries
   (c) 100 countries
   (d) 125 countries

2. Which of the following is used in the Listening test?
   (a) North American native-speaker accents
   (b) British native-speaker accents
   (c) A range of native-speaker accents
   (d) English as a Second Language speaker accents

3. Which of the following statements is correct?
   (a) The IELTS pass mark is 5
   (b) The IELTS pass mark is 7
   (c) The IELTS pass mark is 8
   (d) IELTS is not a pass or fail test

4. There are 9 band scores for the IELTS Test. A “very good user” is band number:
   (a) 1
   (b) 2
   (c) 3
   (d) 4
   (e) 5
   (f) 6
   (g) 7
   (h) 8
   (i) 9

5. It is possible to get a score of 5.5 for the speaking score.
   (a) True
   (b) False

6. Test takers receive a Test Report Form. When are results issued?
   (a) On the day of the test
   (b) 13 days after the test
   (c) 2 months after the test

7. Test results are:
   (a) given over the phone
   (b) sent by mail or collected by the test taker
   (c) sent via email
   (d) sent via fax
8. For how long can the IELTS Test Partners confirm the validity of test results?
   (a) Up to 1 year
   (b) Up to 2 years
   (c) Up to 3 years
   (d) Indefinitely

9. The Academic module is designed for basic survival skills in a broad social and educational context.
   (a) True
   (b) False

10. The Academic Module and the General Training Module have different tests for:
    (a) Speaking and Listening
    (b) Reading and Writing
    (c) Writing and Listening
    (d) All components

11. All test components must be completed on the same day.
    (a) Yes
    (b) No, each section is taken on a different day
    (c) No, Listening, Reading and Writing must be taken on the same day

12. How many questions are there in the Listening Module?
    (a) 4
    (b) 60
    (c) 40
    (d) 100
    (e) None of the above

13. How many times is each section heard?
    (a) once
    (b) three times
    (c) as many times as needed
    (d) each section is heard a different number of times

14. During the Listening test, candidates are given time to read through the questions before listening.
    (a) True
    (b) False

15. The Reading test allows 10 minutes of extra time so that candidates can transfer their answers onto the answer sheet.
    (a) True
    (b) False

16. Both the Academic and the General Training Reading tests use authentic texts.
    (a) True
    (b) False

17. In the Reading test, answers must be written in:
    (a) pencil
    (b) pen
    (c) pen or pencil

18. For Task 1 of the Academic Writing module, candidates are assessed on their ability to:
    (a) describe and explain data
    (b) describe the stages of a process
    (c) describe an object or event or sequence of events
19. In the General Training Writing module, Task 1, the candidate should write their answer in a formal style.
   (a) True
   (b) False

20. In the Writing test, answers must be written in:
   (a) pencil
   (b) pen
   (c) pen or pencil

21. How long is the Speaking test?
   (a) 5-8 minutes
   (b) 11-14 minutes
   (c) 20-25 minutes
   (d) It varies

22. In the Speaking module, interviews between a candidate and an examiner are recorded.
   (a) True
   (b) False

23. Candidates cannot sit for the IELTS test again for 3 months after completing a test.
   (a) True
   (b) False

24. If a candidate is unhappy with their results, they may:
   (a) apply for a re-mark for free
   (b) apply for a re-mark for a fee
   (c) re-take the test for free

25. An identity document is required when applying to take an IELTS test and on the day of the test.
   (a) True
   (b) False

IELTS Guide for Teachers

Note: Some of the information in the IELTS Guide for Teachers has already been covered in the IELTS Information for Candidates, so we will not repeat those questions here.

26. One of the key differences between the IELTS Academic and the IELTS General Training modules is that they use different assessment criteria and a different assessment scale.
   (a) True
   (b) False

27. The level of difficulty in Academic Reading and the General Training Reading modules is the same.
   (a) True
   (b) False

28. If a user has fully operational command of the language and is appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding, they would be:
   (a) an expert user
   (b) a very good user
29. If a user’s basic competence is limited to familiar situations and they are not able to use complex language, they would be:
   (a) a modest user
   (b) a limited user
   (c) an extremely limited user

30. Overall band scores may consist of half scores.
   (a) True
   (b) False

31. If a user’s average score is 5.25, they would be awarded an overall band score of:
   (a) 5
   (b) 5.25
   (c) 5.5

32. If a user’s average score is 7.125, they would be awarded an overall band score of:
   (a) 7
   (b) 7.25
   (c) 7.5

33. IELTS test questions are developed by writers in:
   (a) the US
   (b) the UK
   (c) Canada
   (d) Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US

34. Only British spelling is recognised in the IELTS test.
   (a) True
   (b) False

35. All IELTS examiner applicants must:
   (a) be native speakers
   (b) be non-native speakers
   (c) be native speakers or non-native speakers with a band score of 9 in the Reading and Listening components
   (d) be native speakers or non-native speakers with a band score of 9 in the Speaking and Writing components
Unit 2 – Skills Development for the Listening Test

Now you should have a good overall knowledge of what the IELTS test is and how students apply for and sit for the test. You also have a good idea of what constitutes the 4 test modules of Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. It will be necessary for a teacher of an IELTS Preparation Program to have access to at least one volume of Practice Tests to use as samples for the course (some of these are listed at the end of this course). A good language school is likely to have several of these and even sets for use by the students. They will come with CDs or audio files for the listening component.

This unit is going to look at the skills students need to develop in order to achieve success in the listening module. This will be done by examining tasks designed to practise these skills.

Listening Skills

Communication, both inside and outside of the classroom, means listening and talking. Listening should be an active, not a passive process. It is often helpful to point out to students the meaningful difference between hearing and listening. What do you think the difference is?

A listener must first of all hear what is being said, recognise it as having meaning, understand it, and hold it in short term memory, in order to relate it to what has gone before and what comes after. Any piece of information considered important enough is selected and stored for future reference in long-term memory.

Decoding a message is generally easier if a person is speaking rather than reading something out loud. In addition, discursive markers like stress and intonation placed on words help students to understand the message.

Strategies for Listening

When ESL/EFL students enter into an English language environment they are exposed to endless language situations with a variety of speakers. The IELTS listening test is designed to reflect some of these possible real-world situations. The level of difficulty varies, as do the topics and tasks themselves. Skills that are tested include: listening for specific information such as dates and place names, listening for detail, understanding gist and understanding speaker attitude and opinion.

The Basic Steps to Effective Listening

1. Listening to the instructions and introduction to the passage. This will tell the student/listener what to do and offer information about the situations that will follow in the exercises.

2. In the time before the student begins listening, have them preview the questions they are to answer after listening to the passages. Work with them to highlight key words that they are to listen for in order to predict the type of answer they are looking for, e.g. names, prices or verbs.

3. As they listen, have the students:
   a) listen for key words or their synonyms
   b) listen for discourse markers that tell you the direction of the speaker, i.e. “for example”, “another point is”
   c) write their answers as they listen but move on if they miss something

4. At the end of each section, have the students use the time to look back and check their answers. Have them fill in any gaps with educated guesses if they do not know the answer. Encourage them to check word limits, spelling and handwriting.
Students orient themselves to the text

Questions to ask the students:

- Who are the speakers?
- Where are they?
- Why are they speaking?

This introductory section explains to students that in order for them to understand what people are saying, it is helpful to know the relationship between the speakers. The language people use will depend upon their relationship to the other speakers as well as the listener. Knowing the context of the conversation also helps the listener to understand the language as they can anticipate what the speaker will talk about.

This task involves showing the students four pictures with people involved in conversational settings, with empty speech balloons above their heads (as in comic book drawings).

1) The first picture shows a woman just getting on a bus, standing in front of the driver.
2) The second is in a library where a young man is studying, surrounded by books, with a female friend leaning casually on a stack of books by his side.
3) The third scenario involves a young man with an open map in his hand on a city street, asking directions from a teenage girl, who is responding to his query by pointing in a specific direction.
4) The fourth illustration shows five students from different ethnic backgrounds sitting in chairs in a circular fashion, with a woman moderating some sort of discussion. The students are in various postures, listening to the moderator respond.

Pre-listening for Students

Have the students look at the pictures. Have them try to work out who each of the people are in the scenarios, where they are, and why they are speaking to each other. Have students imagine what they are saying? Hand out blank illustrations, divide students into pairs, and have them write their suppositions in the empty balloons and compare their answers with their partner.

Pre-Listening Exercise 1

Have students listen to the ten short conversations and the example that follows. As they listen, they are to fill in the table to show who the speakers are and why they are speaking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation number</th>
<th>Who are the speakers?</th>
<th>Why are they speaking?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>example</td>
<td>Customer, sales clerk</td>
<td>Customer is asking where the men’s department is</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
Follow-up spoken and written language – Have students make two lists of the types of language they hear in their own language and English every day. Tell them that the difference between the two lists is that one is for spontaneous language and the other is prepared, written language to be read out loud. Have students discuss their answers in a class forum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unprepared (spontaneous) spoken language</th>
<th>Prepared language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talking to family and friends</td>
<td>Television news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for directions</td>
<td>Radio advertisements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students Listen for Specific Information

Questions to ask the students:
- What are the key words?
- What type of words are they?

Explain to students that sometimes when they listen, they are listening for specific information such as dates, times, names or key words. This type of listening for specific information helps students understand the general context of the narrative or speech act as well as increasing their overall listening skill.

Listening Exercise 1 (Specific information)

Hand out a telephone message pad, like the one indicated below. It is from a student residence, where several students live together. Discuss with the students what kind of information they need to listen to in order to complete each message. Have them complete the exercise by listening to the audio and filling in the message form.

Telephone Messages

A. Julia confirming dinner on (1)__________/date at (2)___________.
B. (3)____________________ ready. Cost of repairs (4)_______________.
C. (5)___________________ called. Textbook is (6)___________________.
D. Nick needs his (7)_____________. Take them to college before (8)___________.
E. Dr Boyd is ill with (9)____________. New appointment on (10)___________.
F. Supermarket has found (11) ___________. Collect them at (12) ___________.
G. Sam rang. (13) ______________ for Prof. Hall on Saturday. Please call this number: (14) ________________.

**Listening Exercise 2 (Table and note completion)**

This exercise is designed for students to listen to a dialogue in which one of the speakers is seeking factual information such as names and dates. This is the information that students listen for and write down. Before students listen, hand out the fact sheet and have them decide what sort of information they are to listen for. Have them fill in the blanks as they listen to the dialogue.

**BLUE HARBOUR CRUISES**

Name of Cruise: ______________________________
Price per Person: ______________________________
Departure Times: ______________________________
Included in the Price: __________________________
Jetty No. 2 is situated: __________________________
The commentary is in: __________________________
The lady recommends that they: __________________________

**Listening Exercise 3 (Form filling)**

These exercises are designed to test several skills – active listening for specific information, memory, and accurate completion in the task of form filling.

Students in test situations are only allowed to listen to the dialogue once, so again students should be exposed to the questions beforehand so that they can remember them and keep them in the back of their mind when listening to the telephone conversation.

**Speedy Car Rentals**

**Customer Request Form**

Customer’s Name __________________________________________
Address ________________________________________________
Telephone _____________________________________________
Driver’s License No. _____________________________________
Pick-up date ____________________________________________
Date of return __________________________________________

Circle the correct answer:

(1) Type of car chosen:
A small car
B four-wheel drive
C family car

(2) Number of days required:
A one-day
B three days
C seven days

(3) Agreed cost per day:
A $50.00
B $65.00
C $70.00

(4) Pick up from:
A city
B hotel
C airport

(5) Method of payment:
A cheque
B credit card
C cash

Follow up Exercises

1. Make up various forms for the students to fill out. Have a sample on hand with an accompanying dialogue in which one of the speakers is asking questions and completing the form based on the answers they receive. The task for students is to have enough information in their dialogue so that the listener can fill out the form. Students can then read their dialogue to other students while they fill out the forms as they listen. For example:

The Maple Leaf Language Centre
Student Enrolment Details

Name of Student: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
First Language: ______________________________
Date of Birth: ______________________________
Previous Language Study: ______________________________
Length of Course Desired:
1 month 3 months 6 months 9 months
Type of Accommodation Desired:
Host family  Student hostel  University Dorm
Reason for Studying English: ______________________________

2. Hand out situational cards to the students. Explain to them that they will be making a phone call based on the information on the card. When they do, they have to leave a message on an answering service. The task is that the students have to work out their message beforehand including only the details in concise language. Remind
the students to include their names and contact numbers if they don’t know the person they are calling. Have them read their message to their partners.

_Ringing a friend about a dinner arrangement that you need to change._

_Ringing some friends to invite them to dinner at your house._

_Inviting an overseas visitor to join you for dinner at a restaurant._

**Students Identify Details**

Questions to ask the students:

- When do we need to listen for detail?
- Why is detail important?

Explain to the students that if someone is describing an object like a briefcase or a silk scarf, it is the detail of the description, such as the colour or a reference to the size or shape, which allows us to differentiate that object from another one in the same category. Therefore, students need to listen carefully for the words that describe the detail.

**Pre-listening Exercise**

Have pictures of the same object, e.g. umbrellas, which are similar but not the same, and pairing up the students, have them describe to their partner one of the umbrellas. The description needs to be accurate and clear enough so that the partner can discriminate which umbrella is being described.

**Listening Exercise 1 (Multiple Choice Pictures)**

Students are given a work sheet with a series of questions each with three accompanying pictures. By observing the pictures beforehand, by looking at the written question, and then by listening to the accompanying audio, students are to answer the questions. For example, question 1 shows three pictures of men, each with different coloured hair, two with beards and one without, each with a different style of shirt. The accompanying question is “which picture shows James?” The information on the recording will specify by hair colour, hairstyle, facial hair, and colour of shirt who he is and, by noting those details, students are able to answer correctly.

**Follow-up Exercise**

Have students think of an everyday object. Ask them to think about how to describe it without using its name or saying what it is used for. The students practise with a partner. The class is then divided into two teams, with partners staying on the same team and each person describing their object in front of the class. To gain a point, the other team must correctly identify the object being described.

**Students Identify Main Ideas**

Questions to ask students:

- What are the speakers talking about?
- What are the main ideas and how are they developed?

Explain to the students that when we take part in conversation with others or when we listen to other people talking, we subconsciously separate the important information, the information that we need, or the information that interests us, from the rest of what we hear. In other words, we separate the main ideas from the supporting details. Also explain to students that people often use introductory phrases or interjections to attract the listener’s
attention.

### Listening Exercise

Have the following chart ready for the students. Hand it out with the example filled in. They will see that the speaker and the situation have already been identified. Their task is to identify what the speakers *might say* from this information. Have students listen to the audio and have them fill in the *introductory phrase* first. Have them listen a second time and fill in the rest of the grid, noting the *topic* and then showing how the speakers *develop this topic*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Introductory phrase</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>How the topic develops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two old school friends</td>
<td>Guess who I saw today?</td>
<td>Meeting an old teacher</td>
<td>Talking about teacher’s appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department store; customer and sales clerk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and wife talking about the children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio news item</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two friends making plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two students chatting in university cafeteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College librarian and student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports equipment shop; clerk and two teenagers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Follow-up Exercise

Have students work in partners. Hand out several pictures with scenarios on them and have students choose a picture. The task is to decide on a topic for the characters in the pictures and to write a short dialogue to accompany the picture. Students should also try to write an introductory phrase or greeting for the first speaker. Students then act out their dialogue to two other classmates. Student audience must guess which picture they are acting out.

### Listening Exercise 2 (Multiple choice and note completion)

Explain that in Section 2 of the IELTS Listening Test students will hear one person giving a talk on a topic of general interest. Students will be asked to interpret the speaker’s ideas as well as comment on specific information. Students need to learn how to separate the main idea from supporting details when listening and taking notes on an oral narrative.

Have students look at the questions beforehand and try to work out what the topic is by the vocabulary used. Have them read the questions carefully to find out what sort of information they need to listen for. Have them underline the important words in the multiple-choice questions to help them focus when listening. Have them answer the questions as they listen.
Follow-up Exercise

Have students write a paragraph to sum up the main ideas of the talk. If necessary, allow students to go back and listen to the talk again, and have them make notes of the main ideas. They are also to include any supporting details that they can. When students are finished, have them read aloud their summaries for discussion and comment.

Seeing beyond the surface meaning

Questions for students:

• What does the speaker mean exactly?
• How can we interpret intonation?

Explain to students that people do not always say what they mean. As listeners, we must help our students learn how to interpret not only the words people use but also their intonation patterns. Here we investigate some of the ways of seeing beyond the surface meaning in a spoken conversation.

Pre-listening exercise

Write the following sentence on the board and have the students look at it:

*I thought the assignment was due on Thursday.*

Pair up the students and have them say it in three different ways to produce three different meanings. What are those meanings? Have students discuss them with their partner. Have students develop another short statement and do the same; change the meaning by changing the word stress.

Listening Exercise

Have them listen to the accompanying tape, which consists of eight short dialogues. As they do so, students are to answer yes or no. Make sure the students have written down what indicators or language features helped them to determine the intended meaning. Hand out the following chart and have students note the headings of each column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Question</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g. Did the woman like the shirt?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hesitated; rising intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the weather fine?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the girl trying to avoid the date?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the man satisfied with the phone?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are university fees going to rise?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the woman want to see the computer?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the boy very sick?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the woman like the movie?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the teacher pleased with the girl's work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-listening Exercise

Have several posters (with slogans on them) available, so that students can view them. For example:
People before Profits!

Employment for all!

Hospitals before Hotels!

Discuss with students what the poster slogan means. Usually there are two opinions, or sides, inherent in slogans. Make a list with students about the possible meanings for both sides of the argument.

Listening Exercise

Explain to the students that in Section Three of the IELTS Listening Section they will have to follow a conversation with more than two speakers. In such recordings, students will hear a conversation between three friends who live in a student house together, Sebastien, Christiane, and Francine. They are having a discussion about how the government should spend public money. There are two tasks to accompany the listening extract.

Task 1

Have students listen to the conversation. As they do so, have them complete the grid by placing an X in the box next to the name of the speakers each time they say something. Students are to figure out which of the speakers speaks most often.

Sebastien

\[\begin{array}{cccccccccccc}
& & & & & & & & & & & \\
X & & & & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}\]

Christiane

\[\begin{array}{cccccccccccc}
& & & & & & & & & & & \\
X & & & & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}\]

Francine

\[\begin{array}{cccccccccccc}
& & & & & & & & & & & \\
X & & & & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}\]

Task 2

Task 2 involves answering questions on the listening extract. Have students read the questions carefully and underline any words that they think will help them focus their listening. Have students listen to the extract a second time and instruct them to circle the correct answer. The following are some sample questions:

1. The person at the door is:
   a) looking for work
   b) asking for money
   c) looking for the hospital

2. Sebastien thinks the hospital should be financed by:
   a) local residents
   b) a special health tax
   c) the state
   d) private companies

3. Christiane thinks that Francine’s view on hospital funding is:
Follow-up Exercise

Have the students look again at some of the expressions that were used in the conversation. Have them work in pairs and try to figure out their meaning. How many of the expressions can be interpreted literally?

I beg your pardon!  To get away from it all
From the cradle to the grave  The party’s over

Students may need to listen to the conversation again, paying particular attention to when each expression was used and by whom. Ensure that they know what the expressions mean in context.

Students following signpost words

Questions to ask the students:
• What are signpost words?
• How do they help us understand?

Explain to the students that people who are speaking publicly, like lecturers, illustrate the stages of their talk through the use of ‘signpost words’. Being able to identify ‘signpost words’ enables students to understand formal spoken English.

Pre-listening Exercise

Signpost words help direct a listener’s focus: in other words, they warn us that more information is forthcoming and suggest what kind of information this may be: e.g. positive, negative, similar, different. They may also introduce examples of a main point made earlier.

Here is a sample of an unfinished spoken text. It starts with the signpost word “while”, which suggests that there is a contrast or opposite to follow:

While a great deal has been achieved in the area of cancer research, there….

The sentence could be finished with the words: . . . is still a lot we do not understand about cancer.

Have the following list available for students to further outline the reasons we use signpost words.
A. Leading towards a comparison
B. Leading towards a contrast or opposite
C. Introducing an example of what was said earlier
D. Suggesting cause and effect or result
E. Providing additional information
F. Setting out the stages of a talk

Students made aware of stress, rhythm, and intonation

Question to ask the students:
• How do intonation and word stress help us understand?

Explain to the students that public speakers and lecturers make use of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns,
along with signpost words to divide their information into ‘chunks’ of meaning. Learning to recognise these speech patterns will help students to understand formal spoken English.

**Pre-listening exercise**

Present the students with a variety of telephone numbers. You model one by reading it aloud and ask the students to take note of intonation. The voice normally goes up after each group of numbers and then drops as the speaker comes to the end of the whole number. Tell them that speakers normally use an upward intonation to indicate that there is more information to come and a drop in tone when they come to the end of a piece of information.

5849 3714 * 612 9983 4721 * 01223 460278 * 33 76 49 52 98
* 0412 613612

**Listening Exercise**

Hand out the excerpts below, which have been taken from different lectures and have them mark in pencil the words they think should be stressed and where the voice should rise and fall. Have each student read their passages out to a partner, as if they were giving a talk, asking them to pay particular attention to the intonation patterns they need to keep their listener interested and to ensure that the meaning is clear. After both students have read their passages, have the class listen to the recorded version for comparison. Alternatively, each student can be recorded speaking one passage each.

* Urban society began when hunter-gatherers learnt (a) how to farm land, (b) how to domesticate animals and (c) how to build permanent structures to act as shelter.

* There are three levels of government in Australia: firstly, there is Federal Government, which looks after issues of national importance such as immigration and defence. Then there is State Government located in each capital city, and which has responsibility for such things as education, the police and urban and regional planning, and thirdly we find Local Government, which controls services such as waste collection, public libraries, and childcare centres.

* Was Napoleon poisoned or did he die of natural causes? The Napoleonic Society of America, an association of historians and collectors, has given a modern twist to this debate. They have done this by revealing the results of chemical analyses of hair said to have come from the head of the French emperor.

* The many forms and styles of handwriting that exist have attracted a wide range of aesthetic, psychological and scientific studies, each with its own aims and procedures. Moreover, each of the main families of writing systems (European, Semitic, East Asian) has its own complex history of handwriting styles.

* Unit Four of the IELTS Listening test is always a lecture or talk from which students must complete exercises completing flow charts, tables, and choosing correct responses from multiple choice examples.
Unit 2 – Activities

Self-Assessment Task

You will need to be logged into the Student Centre, Teaching IELTS Preparation elective, to complete this task.

IELTS Practice Test – Listening

For this task, you will listen to an authentic IELTS listening test and complete the answer sheet provided. This will help you see the test from your students’ perspective.

You will need: speakers or earphones connected to your computer; a pen; a printed copy of the Practice Test and of the answer sheet. Alternatively, you could have the Practice Test document open on your screen and write the answers on a separate sheet of paper.

We will provide you with the correct answers in the Activities for Unit 3. You DO NOT submit this task.

Good luck!
Unit 3 – Reading

What is efficient reading?

Efficient reading is the understanding, interpretation and evaluation of a written message by using the knowledge the reader has gained from life experience. The purpose of reading is to understand. When understanding breaks down, efficient reading has not actually occurred. When we are reading, we are interpreting the words the author has chosen to express an idea. If our vocabulary is inadequate, we will not be able to understand the author’s message. In other instances, we understand all the words used but do not comprehend the message inherent in them. This can happen for a number of reasons:

- We do not understand the background of the message; e.g. someone who is not familiar with New Zealand history might not understand a reference to “the Treaty” although s/he understands what the word ‘treaty’ means.
- We might find it difficult to understand the sentences because they are put together in an unusual style or because they are very long.
- We might find the layout of the text confusing.

What can students do to ensure that they are reading efficiently?

1. They can understand why they are reading – for example, are they researching a particular topic, are they preparing for exams, are they looking to gain an overview of the reading or specific information, are they looking to evaluate the text?

2. They should know what they want from the text. Have them ask the following question, “What do I expect to learn from this passage?” Emphasise to students that it is important for them to ask specific questions. For instance, if they are reading a chapter entitled “The effect of heredity and the environment on humans”, the kind of questions that they should be able to answer includes, “what does the author understand by the word ‘environment’?” Finally, if the reader is successful in their reading, then they should be able to formulate the text in their own words; i.e. what the author thinks the effect of heredity and environment on humans is.

3. Have students pre-read the material surrounding the text in order to give them an outline of what it is all about. In an article, students may look at:
   
   a. The title and the date (gives the main idea and how timely the article is)
   b. Read the abstract (gives a concise summary of the article)
   c. Read the first paragraph
   d. Look at all the headings
   e. Look at any diagrams, headings, illustrations
   f. Read the conclusion

4. Encourage the students to understand what they are reading. Remind them to take it slowly and re-read when they don’t understand. Instead of saying, “I’m going to read 100 pages before I go to bed tonight”, tell them to wait until they get up in the morning as tiredness works against efficient reading; remind them to take notes when reading; encourage them to discuss their readings with peers and the teacher.

Reading for IELTS

The IELTS examination tests students’ ability to read between 1500 and 2500 words in a fairly short period in order to find out certain information. In both the Academic and General Reading Modules, students are given 60
minutes to answer a total of 40 questions. The texts and questions are graded according to skill level. If the student can identify what skill they need to successfully complete each set of questions, their chances of overall success greatly increase. It is these particular skills that we focus on in preparation for the Reading Module.

Types of Questions in the IELTS Reading Component

1. Matching headings to paragraphs
2. Gap filling
3. Short answer question
4. Specific facts
5. Specific information (Y/N)
6. View point

Skills Required for Effective Reading

- The basics – familiarity with question types, time frame and format of the exam
- Skimming
- Scanning – to practise speed
- Referencing
- Pronunciation
- Deducing or working around unknown vocabulary
- Recognising and using synonyms and paraphrasing
- Recognising and relationships within texts
- Highlighting key words and points in questions and texts
- Understanding and following rubrics
- Inferring writer’s opinion
- Transferring answers accurately and within the given time frame
- Reading at speed
- Predicting
- Linking words

It is advisable to practise two to three skills per week so that all the skills can be mastered in four to five weeks, depending on the level of the student.

Practical Tips

1. Use non-IELTS material at the beginning
2. Base each session with the students on a question type for maximum practice
3. Encourage reading outside of class
4. Employ a balance of teaching and testing
5. Be prepared and read ahead
6. Use online resources, such as newspapers and well-known magazines, like Time, National Geographic, The Guardian, USA Today.

Students orient themselves to the text

Students are given texts that professionals have chosen for them so it is important that they skim through each passage asking themselves the questions that will help them understand the text quickly. These include:

1. What subject is the text about?
2. Why was the text written?
3. Who was it written for?
4. Why would somebody read this text?
5. What type of text is it?
Titles and Sub-headings – Nearly all articles and texts have a title that alerts the reader to the subject. For example:

The Dynamic Continent

*The constantly changing landscape of Antarctica is a challenge to cartographers.*

6. What is this article about?
7. What kind of person would be interested in this article?
8. What do you expect to read about in the first paragraph?

Now have students read this first paragraph:

IN MOST AREAS OF THE WORLD, certainly in Europe, both the physical landscape and the maps of it are relatively stable. Map revision is usually concerned with manmade features, such as buildings and roads. This is not true of Antarctica. The Antarctic sheet ice is a dynamic entity and cartographers have to contend with big and rapid changes in the physical geography of the continent. For example, earlier this year they faced the dramatic break-up of the Larsen and Prince Gustav ice shelves in the Antarctic Peninsula region, which is where the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) concentrates its mapping activity. Topographic maps are probably changing faster in Antarctica than anywhere else in the world.

9. What is the writer's purpose in this first paragraph?
10. Is there a sentence that best summarises the main idea in this first paragraph?

**Note:** These are the type of questions that students should be encouraged to ask themselves when they first encounter a text. They help give the student an understanding of what and why they are reading and prepare them for the task ahead. As native speakers we automatically scan headlines or pictures and their captions to get an idea of an article before reading it, if we decide to! For our students it is important to encourage the transfer of these L1 skills as understanding the gist assists in other aspects such as predicting the content and guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from context, all skills which aid overall comprehension.

Often the writer's opinion changes throughout an article and IELTS can test a student's ability to determine this. Questions such as the following will highlight this for students:

11. What do you learn about the writer and his or her purpose in the second paragraph?
12. How do you expect the article to continue?

**Paragraphs** – As students read through each paragraph of an article, encourage them to build on their understanding of what the writer is trying to say.

13. How does paragraphing help you do this?
14. When you first read a text, what should you look for in each paragraph?

**Further Exercises**

**A.** You the teacher have a look at titles, sub-headings and opening paragraphs of several articles in a newspaper or magazine. Pick out some that you think are helpful to a reader and some that are not. Cut out the articles and take them to class. Discuss the articles with the class, referring to the questions from the previous exercises.
B. Pick several articles that you think have a good introduction. Cut off the title, sub-headings and first paragraph. Bring them into class and hand them out to pairs of students. Have students exchange information and discuss what you would expect to read based on the information that you have.

**Skimming and scanning for specific information and detail**

Explain to students that in order to find a particular detail of information in an IELTS passage they will need to skim through the passage fairly quickly, scanning for clues as to where the information might be found. For students, this means reading faster than their normal pace. There are a variety of question types that test a student’s ability to extract certain information from a text and in nearly all cases the information is factual.

**Short answer questions** – In this type of task, the questions test a student’s ability to locate the right information in a short passage or article. Tell students that when they meet this type of task, they should read the questions carefully before going to the text to ensure that they know what they are looking for. One way to help students is to train them in underlining key words in the questions. Then they just have to scan for that word, a synonym or an example to find the answer rather than needing to read the whole text carefully.

For example, the following questions are taken from an article about sand. (This article from “Insight into IELTS by Vanessa Jakeman and Clare McDowell can be downloaded from this unit online) Students are requested to read over the questions and underline key words that will guide them further to the required answers.

1. What two substances made by humans are mentioned in the text? (Key words: TWO, HUMANS)

2. Which part of a grain of sand have scientists measured? (Key words: GRAIN, MEASURED)

3. What two factors determine the shape of a piece of sand? (Key words: TWO, SHAPE)

When students have finished underlining the key words, discuss them as a class and then have students read the article and underline their answers, in a 10-minute time frame, if possible.

**Further Exercises**

Ask students to find an article in a newspaper or magazine that contains a lot of factual information and instruct them to write five questions on the article. Discuss the answers in class.

TEST TIP: Remind students that in a block of short answer questions they will find that the answers occur in the text in the same order as in the questions.

**Identifying main and supporting ideas**

Remind students that most paragraphs in well-written or argumentative texts contain at least one main idea and very often these ideas are supported by examples or by further explanation. IELTS tests a student’s ability to identify main and supporting points and also to differentiate between them.

**Multiple-Choice** – students are given a short passage. They are given five minutes to read the passage, underline the main ideas, and then answer several questions.

**Short Answer** – Students are given a short passage. They are given ten minutes to read the passage, underline the main ideas and take note of the supporting points. Some typical questions include:

- What is the message in the first paragraph?
- Which paragraphs in the text offer further explanation of the message?
- Which words in the second paragraph help you identify the supporting points?
- How easy would it be to write a summary of the text? Why?
Note: Remind students that sometimes multiple-choice questions in IELTS have more than four options and students have to pick more than one correct answer.

Paraphrasing – In this task, students are asked to identify main ideas from the text as they are paraphrased in the multiple-choice question/statements. They are asked to revisit the multiple-choice statements and look carefully at how the original meaning has been paraphrased in the statements. They are asked to underline and paraphrase some of the other ideas mentioned in the text and to write a summary of the article as well.

Note taking – Taking notes is an important and useful skill for IELTS students to learn. Typically, it involves recognising the main ideas in a text and writing down in abbreviated form the key points to remember.

Improving global reading skills

In lengthy articles, writers make use of paragraphing to divide the text into manageable pieces for the reader. A new paragraph usually introduces a new point or theme. As a reader, students should be able to recognise what this is. To do this, IELTS students learn to make note of main ideas in each paragraph through paragraph heading exercises.

Paragraph headings – some texts, like newspaper articles or reports, have headings so that the reader can quickly skim through and get a good idea of the content.

Exercise – students are given an article with only the title indicated. There are several paragraphs but the headings have been removed. Students are instructed to read the article and write their own title for each of the paragraphs. They must complete the exercise in 20 minutes. When completed, have students share and compare their headings with other students. Discuss the main ideas in the paragraphs in order to decide which heading is most appropriate. Discuss which paragraphs were more difficult to find headings for and why.

Test Tip – the IELTS reading component often tests students on their ability to select a heading for each paragraph in a text from a list of headings.

Summarising

IELTS reading sections contain questions that test a student’s understanding of the main ideas in a passage by providing a summary of the text with gaps and a box of possible answers to choose from. The summary usually covers the main ideas presented throughout the text and so it is necessary that the student understand the whole article. The summary will also paraphrase the main points in the text so students will also have to be comfortable with this.

Exercise – students are asked to read an article and, while doing so, making a mental note of the main ideas in the article. They are then asked to skim through the passage a second time, underlining the main ideas in each paragraph. The third task is to write a sentence that summarises each paragraph.

Follow-up – students are to compare their sentences with a partner and discuss which sentences best capture the main idea of each sentence. Once the comparison exercise is complete, students are asked to write a sub-heading for the article and to write a short summary of the author’s purpose for the article and who the intended readers are.

In IELTS testing situations, the summary may be given to the candidates with gaps which they need to fill by choosing the most appropriate word from a list.

Understanding arguments

At least one of the texts that students will encounter in the IELTS Reading Unit will contain some detailed logical arguments and the students will be tested on their ability to identify and understand the arguments as they are
Sample Exercise – students are given an article and instructed to skim through it and highlight the areas that deal with arguments and those that simply present facts. Here is the article:

Penguins Show Signs of Stress

A new argument has been put forward as to whether penguins are disturbed by the presence of tourists in Antarctica. Previous research by scientists from Keil University in Germany monitored Adelie penguins and noted that the birds’ heart rates increased dramatically at the sight of a human as far as 30 metres away. But new research using an artificial egg, which is equipped to measure heart rates, disputes this. Scientists from the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge say that a slow moving human who does not approach the nest too closely, is not perceived as a threat by penguins.

The earlier findings have been used to partly explain the 20% drop in populations of certain types of penguins near tourist areas. However, tour operators have continued to insist that their activities do not adversely affect wildlife in Antarctica, saying they encourage non-disruptive behaviour in tourists, and that the decline in penguin numbers is caused by other factors.

Amanda Nimon of the Scott Polar Research Institute spent three southern hemisphere summers at Cuverville Island in Antarctica studying penguin behaviour towards humans. “A nesting penguin will react very differently to a person rapidly and closely approaching the nest,” says Nimon. “First they exhibit large and prolonged heart rate changes and then they often flee the nest leaving it open for predators to fly in and remove eggs or chicks.” The artificial egg, specially developed for the project, monitored both the parent who had been ‘disturbed’ when the egg was placed in the nest and the other parent as they both took it in turns to guard the nest.

However, Boris Culik, who monitored the Adelie penguins, believes that Nimon’s findings do not invalidate his own research. He points out that species behave differently – and Nimon’s work was with Gentoo penguins. Nimon and her colleagues believe that Culik’s research was methodologically flawed because the monitoring of penguins’ responses entailed capturing and restraining the birds and fitting them with heart-rate transmitters. Therefore, argues Nimon, it would not be surprising if they became stressed on seeing a human subsequently.

The following questions are to be answered when students finish the first task:

1. Why do you think this article was written?
2. What do you notice about the views presented in it?
3. What overall message is presented?
4. What would be a suitable sub-heading for the article?

The second task is a multiple-choice question. Underline the key words in the arguments A–F. Then answer the following question: Which three of the following arguments are stated in the text?

A. Penguins are not afraid of people who behave calmly.
B. Penguins need better protection from tourists.
C. Not all penguins behave in the same way.
D. Tourists are not responsible for the fall in penguin numbers.
E. Penguins are harder to research when they have young.
F. Tour operators should encourage tourists to avoid Antarctica.

Identifying opinion/attitude and making inferences

IELTS frequently tests students on their ability to identify opinions and views as they are presented in a text. The
terms “views” or “claims” are used in the test instructions and refer to the arguments or opinions put forward by the author.

**Sample Exercise** – Hand out the following excerpts to students and ask them to read them once over. Ask them to determine whether or not they are giving an opinion, making a claim or presenting a fact.

Like crying and laughing, yawning is a variation of normal breathing. It is a reflex action that is not under conscious control. I find playing a Shakespearean character very different from giving a concert or doing an emotional scene in a film. Performing music doesn’t take that kind of concentration.

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At the tender age of just three months, little boys can detect a difference between male and female babies – and it seems they like the boys better, say researchers in Britain.

------------

Based on our findings, future changes to Antarctic map resulting from major improvements in source information are likely to be minimal.

------------

Many companies have schemes that reward high sales but in my experience they fail to take notice of the ‘backroom’ members of the teams who help to make such sales possible.

**Yes, No, Not Given** – A task that is often used to test a student’s understanding of the writer’s message is one that provides a list of possible views or claims and asks the student if they agree with what the writer says or not. In an IELTS reading, the following questions may be asked to support this task:

Do the following statements agree with the claims of the writer in the Reading Passage? Write:

- **YES** if the statement agrees with the writer
- **NO** if the statement contradicts the writer
- **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information about this in the passage

*Hint:* Explain to the students that taking their time reading the passage is the best way to approach this task, and ensure that they fully understand the differences in their answers. If they write ‘**NO**’ as their answer, they are saying that the claim expressed in the question is the opposite of the claim expressed in the article. Choosing ‘**NOT GIVEN**’ says that the student cannot find anything in the passage about this idea.

**Identifying Attitude and Making Inferences** – It is difficult to identify attitudes and infer meaning in some cases because the student has to understand something that is not directly stated. IELTS recognises that these are very demanding reading skills and so they are not tested very often. If they are tested, the common task is a multiple-choice question that offers a number of possible interpretations of a view/argument and requires the student to select the correct one.

**Sample Exercise** – Read the following extract from a book review and answer the subsequent questions.

"**Astonishing the Gods**” by Ben Okri is a not for the habitually cynical. Nor, even if you’re not a habitual cynic, is it the kind of book that should be read on a day when the real world is likely to intrude. This book oozes escapism. But it isn’t easy or simple to digest.

So, to avoid irritation, do not try to read this short but intense novel on your way to work or at times when you might have to stop to answer telephone calls or cope with domestic or other practicalities. Also, avoid it like the plague if you are hooked on straightforward linear narratives or if you’re the sort of person who can only identify with trees that are trees and buildings that don’t dissolve into thin air.

Apologies for appearing to labour this point about who should read Okri and about when and how he should be read, but he has been so harshly criticised by the impatiently earthbound that the point cannot be made strongly enough. If you aren’t capable of – or in the mood for – locking yourself away for a few hours and allowing your
mind to drift into a dreamlike state down magical, mythical avenues, you’d be best to settle for a book with a ‘normal’ plot, tangible landscapes and effortlessly understandable characters.

Choose the most appropriate answer by circling the corresponding letter.

1. According to the writer, the book should be read:
   A. Several times
   B. In short bursts
   C. With an open mind
   D. By an experienced reader

2. The book contains:
   A. Offensive material
   B. A complex story
   C. Life-like characters
   D. Imaginative humour

3. Some readers have failed to:
   A. Appreciate Okri’s style
   B. Understand Okri’s message
   C. Recognise the setting of the book
   D. Finish reading the book

The General Training Module

The IELTS General Training Reading Module (GT) presents a series of texts and accompanying questions that test a variety of reading skills. The task types are similar to those used in the Academic module and Unit Three of the GT module is the same as that of the Academic module. However, the type of texts is very different between the two modules.

Multiple Choice – In Unit 1 of the GT module, students will be tested on their ability to identify or find factual information, as well as use their skills to deduce or infer an answer. Texts in this Unit are short and may take a variety of formats.

Exercise – Read the following advertisements and answer the multiple-choice questions.

Cafron Sureshot M
Ideal pocket autofocus
Compact, fully automatic, high quality lens
Was $129.00
NOW ONLY $89.00

VISA & MASTERCARD

This is an advertisement for:

A. A pocket calculator
B. Binoculars
C. A camera
D. Sunglasses

**TRAVELS WITH A MEXICAN CIRCUS**

Tuesday 13th September at 7:30 pm

Travel writer **Katie Hickman** recalls remote and beautiful parts of Mexico and its people during the year she spent travelling around with a circus troupe.

**TICKETS ARE REQUIRED**

What sort of event is being advertised?
A. A circus
B. A film
C. A fashion display
D. A talk

**BOTHERED BY INSECTS?**

Don’t let mosquitoes ruin your holiday sleep or your health!

A lightweight (500 g) mosquito net for travellers complete with spreader frame, supports, and compact (80cm x 30 cm) zippered bag. Pre-treated with a synthetic pyrethroid permethrin (as recommended by the World Health Organisation) adding repellence to the physical barrier.

**Total cost delivered $29.00**
**Impregnation kits $6.50**

**APPROPRIATE APPLICATIONS**

24 HOUR Tel/Fax 01352 762936

The advertisement suggests that the net can:
A. Be used by children
B. Fold up to a small size
C. Be enlarged to fit any bed
D. Be zipped or sewn

The price for this mosquito net includes:
A. Something to carry it in
B. A tube of repellent
C. An impregnation kit
D. A treated pillow

**True, False, Not Given** – This type of question was covered in the Academic Reading Module but here a GT text is illustrated. An advertisement is again used from which students need to find specific information and answer multiple-choice questions.

**MISSISSAUGA TRANSPORT**

* **AIRPORT SERVICES** a speciality
* Well established & reliable
* Up to 4 persons

$35.00 to Pearson International Airport
$45.00 to Toronto Island Airport

* No destination too far!
* Discount for return bookings
* 8-seater mini-bus available

416-555-1512

Answer the questions by writing:

TRUE if the statement is true
FALSE if the statement is false
NOT GIVEN if no information is given about this

1. It will cost $35.00 for two people to go to Pearson.
2. Mississauga Transport is a new company.
3. Mississauga Transport will go anywhere.
4. A discount is available for bookings of eight or more.

Matching – this skill tests a student’s skimming and scanning ability and it is important for students to be qualified in this so that they can read quickly in order to find information they need. Students are given short descriptions that are similar but not the same. They read those and then refer to a set of statements that are either true or false, according to the information contained in them as matched against the articles.

Further exercises – Have the students get into small groups and have them select one of the following themes:

- English language courses
- Jobs
- Travel
- Books/Films
- Restaurants

Have students cut out some advertisements from magazines or newspapers on their chosen topic. Have them bring them to class for discussion. Pick the six that have the most information and paste them on 8 x 11/A4 paper. Have students think of matching questions for the ads. Have them exchange their work with other groups.

Reading Exercise

**Words Dancing and Simmering: A Conversation with Bharti Kirchner**

By John Grey

Previously a systems analyst with IBM and a prize-winning author of several Cookbooks, including “Indian Inspired” and “Cuisines of India”, Bengali-born Bharti Kirchner has now conquered the frontier of fiction writing with the publication of her first novel, “Shiva Dancing” (Plume 1998) and her most recent novel, “Sharmila’s Book” (Dutton 1999). Both books are receiving good reviews from both South Asian and Western audiences alike, perhaps for their bi-cultural themes and highly romantic plots.

Currently, Kirchner is working on her third novel which is also set in the dual environments of the US and India. She is also contemplating work on an additional cookbook and novel. In her spare time, Kirchner enjoys gardening, travelling, cooking (of course), fitness, and writing magazine articles or book reviews in her home in
Seattle, Washington, where she resides with her American husband, Tom Kirchner.

Through a series of e-mail exchanges, Kirchner sheds light on the trials of a bi-Cultural identity, her recent novels, and South Asian women…

John Grey: Tell us about your childhood and how it influenced your decision to write. Did you read many books or write as a child?

Bharti Kirchner: I came from a family that loved literature and encouraged reading. In the evening, we'd sit around my grandfather who would read from Tagore, Chandra, or Debi, and then everyone would take part in discussing the novels--- like a bookstore reading today. There was a lot of respect for literature as a high form of expression of a human condition, a view I hold even today. I wrote poems in Bengali and read voraciously; in fact, my mother says that I skipped fairy tales and went straight to adult books. Not only did I read classic Bengali writing, but I also read translations of European and Russian literature. The Bengali language is rich in both original work and translations of world classics, and those helped me to broaden my horizons.

JG: And your varied career path? What influenced your career journey from systems analyst, to cookbook author, and presently, a fiction writer?

BK: Though my family encouraged reading, I knew it was no means to make a living.

My parents were college educated and wanted me to have a career, and because I had an aptitude for mathematics, I went in the direction of science. I immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, mainly for scholastic reasons and pursued mathematics and computer science. I enrolled in a non-fiction writing problem at the University of Washington while I was still employed full-time with IBM (in Seattle). I didn’t study fiction very formally; rather, I gained experience with writing through various workshops taken over the years, and from learning and reading on my own.

When I enrolled myself at the University of Washington, I was not thinking of a Career change. I was merely following a long time wish to write. Also, I had a Bengali cookbook idea in my mind – I used to teach cooking as a hobby on weekends while I was still with IBM. Once in the writing program, however, I found that I loved writing – it was one of those "this is what I was meant to do" sort of things. I took a leave of absence from IBM to pursue writing for a while, and, fortunately for me, I never had to return to a full - time job. The switch to writing novels was a natural progression. After I had written non-fiction articles and cooking books, I was drawn to fiction. Prior to that, for about five years, I was reading 'how-to's (on fiction writing) in my spare time without knowing why. Then one day, I had an image of a girl (about seven) standing by a camel in Rajasthan, which became the basis for my first novel, Shiva Dancing.

JG: Tell us about your process of writing.

BK: Novel writing is mostly an unconscious process. A silent, meditative space inside you prepares you for a journey. You drop your skin and dip into another universe, the universe of your characters. I didn't consciously choose many of the features of this novel (Sharmila's Book); rather, it was only after the fact, after I'd finished the novel and re-read it, that I discovered certain patterns or characteristics. After the book was published, readers and reviewers pointed things out to me that made me realise, "Ah, that was why I was writing this." I feel that too much analysis on the part of the author not only spoils the fun of creating but also does not make for good writing. I believe it's the job of a reader and a reviewer to analyse the book (they'll do that anyway), with the author correcting if necessary. As for the story plot, the story dictates how I write it. For example, I wrote Sharmila's Book in first person with a language that, I hope, is energetic. Shiva Dancing has multiple viewpoints and is more reflective. To date, I have not come to any topics that I feel overstep cultural boundaries / taboos in my novels.

Source: www.monsoonmag.com
Questions 1-3 below: Complete the following statements with no more than THREE WORDS TAKEN FROM THE TEXT.

Two reasons why Bharti Kirchner's novels appeal to people from different cultures are:

1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________

The countries in which Kirchner's next novel will take place are:

__________________________________________

Questions 1 – 7 below: Read each of the following statements and answer to the best of your ability by circling one of the following abbreviations.

Y (YES) if the statement agrees with what Kirchner says
N (NO) if the statement disagrees with what Kirchner says
NG (NOT GIVEN) if Kirchner does not give her opinion on this subject.

Y/N/NG Authors read their works in bookshops, and then people discuss them.

Y/N/NG As a child, Kirchner did not like to read.

Y/N/NG Classic Bengali writing is based on European and Russian writing.

Y/N/NG Kirchner studied how to write novels at the University of Washington.

Y/N/NG Kirchner went to the University of Washington because she had wanted to be a writer for some time.

Y/N/NG While working at IBM, Kirchner taught cooking to make extra money.

Y/N/NG Kirchner believes writers should not overstep cultural boundaries.

Reading Exercise

JR: In your first novel, Shiva Dancing, you address concerns that are similar to those in Sharmila's Book, in terms of gender-based cultural issues. Why have you chosen to discuss stories of South Asian women immigrants? Are you resolving personal issues of identity through your female characters?

A: I hope I am addressing a much more universal concern, not just trying to resolve my own identity issues. Also remember these are novels, not memoirs. An emphasis on self can only hinder story telling. All our thoughts and actions are coloured by our perception of who we are and, in that sense, the identity issue is an important one for everyone.

JR: Pursuant to that question, Shiva Dancing resembles a bildungsroman novel, a novel of growing up. Was this your intention? I also noted that you identify Meena with a religion of India that itself is far removed from mainstream South Asian society – a small unknown village in Rajasthan. Is the purpose to reveal that not only is Meena foreign in the U.S., but that she is also of obscure background in the land of her origin?

B: I didn’t intend the book to be a bildungsroman novel. I didn’t even intend to add the chapter of Meena growing up in San Francisco, except that I later realised I’d have to in order to fill in the big gap of time between her kidnapping in the desert and her life in the software jungle. I also wanted to show that such a person (coming from a remote Indian village) can be effective in American society.
JR: Why did you choose Shiva rather than say a female deity like Kali to echo throughout your novel and to be the title?

C: I didn't choose Shiva, perhaps Shiva choose me! What I mean to say is this: at first I had in mind to use the dancing image of Nataraj only as the logo for a tribal political party (the Moxans). However, as I kept writing, I found the destruction/recreation theme lay under the surface of the story. Meena's life goes in turmoil only to be transformed at the end. The same goes for Vishnu and Antoine. It's God Shiva dancing!

JR: What is the purpose behind your choice of the characters in Shiva Dancing, namely Carlos, Kazuko and the Gossets?

D: Carlos and Kazuko represent the global (for lack of a better word) vision of the book. Meena derives much joy in her life from these two people. I wanted to show how people of vastly different ethnic backgrounds can come together as friends, learn from each other, adopt each other's ways (Carlos calls her Meenaji) and help each other in crisis (Carlos threatens Antoine). I feel that if we join hands across the fence then, and only then, can we hope to survive. The Gossets represent the insular segment of the American population; kind and well meaning, but ultimately failing in their effort to protect their illusions. However, Meena does find a father in Mr. Gossett and she relates to him far better than she does to Mrs. Gossett.

JR: Toward the end of Shiva Dancing, Meena notes that her identity with Vishnu was really a fantasy, an identity that she wanted to cling to. What is the purpose of having Meena cling to Vishnu, even when she is far removed from him in terms of time, geography, and culture?

E: I was pointing out the freedom Meena has in the U.S. Many South Asian women do not recognise this freedom, do not exercise it, and are a victim of their old programming. Vishnu and Antoine do represent the old and new of tradition. It's curious that many of my women readers have said they've fallen in love with Vishnu! One woman said she would like to beat Antoine up! However, Meena chose Antoine. Good or bad, she has undergone a transformation in America. The place where we're raised has a tremendous effect on us. It's tradition versus upbringing.

JR: How does the novel assuage South Asian women who feel caught between traditional South Asian and modern American culture?

F: I don't like the term "role model" particularly, but that's what I had intended Meena to be. Not a victim, not someone who constantly analyses her immigrant experience, but one who lives life like any American would without forgetting for Indian roots. Her experience, I must point out, is atypical. An American couple raised her and had a certain set of advantages (and disadvantages, I might add) that many South Asian women will not have. You can't draw conclusions about South Asian women from this novel. By its nature a novel is a specific story of a specific person. The women in my book are strong. Meena, her mother, and Asha, are all examples of feminine strength. This is not an aggressive strength, but the quiet strength of a flower stalk.

Questions 1-6: Bharti Kirchner’s answers to the interviewer’s questions have been labelled A – F. Choose the most appropriate title for each unit by putting the correct letter next to each title below:

Example: Unit A

I. The role of Meena and other characters
II. Growing up in California – why it’s there
III. Cross cultural friendships
IV. Old versus new tradition defined by characters
V. Is the novel autobiographical?
VI. The reasons for the title

1. Section A _______
2. Section B _______
3. Section C _______
Questions 7-10 below: Choose the most appropriate answer to complete the following sentences by circling the option that best finishes the sentence.

7. Meena comes from:
   A. San Francisco
   B. An Indian City
   C. A small Village
   D. A god named Shiva

8. Shiva is probably:
   A. A male god
   B. A female god
   C. A tribal political party
   D. A famous dancer

9. Meena has a good relationship with all of the following except:
   A. Mr. Gossett
   B. Mrs. Gossett
   C. Carlos
   D. Kazuko

10. Kirchner tells us that Meena marries:
    A. Antoine
    B. Vishnu
    C. Carlos
    D. None of the above
Unit 3 – Activities

You will need to download material from the *Teaching IELTS Preparation* elective, to complete this task, but you don’t need to be online to do the task.

**IELTS Reading Test**

For this task, you will do an authentic IELTS reading test and complete the answer sheet provided.

You will need: a pen and a printed copy of the *Practice Test - Reading* and the answer sheet. Alternatively, you could have the Practice Test document open on your screen and write the answers on a separate sheet of paper.

We will provide you with the correct answers in the Activities for Unit 4. You DO NOT submit this task.

Good luck!
Unit 4 – Writing

A. Academic Writing Module

Sixty minutes are allotted for the Academic Module in which there are two tasks to complete. It is suggested to students that they spend about twenty minutes on **Task One**, which is a writing assignment of at least 150 words. **Task Two** involves at least 250 words and should take about forty minutes.

**Task One**

Describe information given as a chart, table, or diagram (bar charts, pie charts, tables, graphs, flow charts, pictures)
Minimum number of words: 150
Time recommended: 20 minutes

**Explanation:** In **Task One**, the candidates are asked to look at a diagram, table or perhaps a short piece of text, and to present the information in their own words. Depending upon the type of input and the task suggested, candidates are assessed on their ability to:

a) Organise, present and possibly compare data
b) Describe the stages of a process or procedure
c) Describe an object or event or sequence of events
d) Explain how something works

**Assessment of the Task**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your introduction paraphrases the question and makes reference to dates, dimensions and sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You make reference to the general trend/s before going into specifics and deal with the data in a logical order.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You use connectives and conjunctions logically and your conclusion is appropriate (including comments where this is asked for).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You answer all aspects of the question.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You interpret data correctly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You make relevant use of data by comparing and contrasting.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your grammar is accurate.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can use a variety of sentence structures accurately.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You can use an appropriate range of words. 1 2 3 4

Skills required for successful completion of Task One

- Understanding and describing visual information
- Understanding the topic words and dimensions
- Comparing striking features and general items
- Planning
- Using specialised language
- Organising
- Grouping
- Highlighting

Task Two

Write an essay

Topics are chosen about issues in the realm of contemporary common knowledge.

Minimum number of words: 250
Time recommended: 40 minutes

Explanation: In Task Two, candidates are presented with a point of view, argument or problem. Candidates are assessed on their ability to:

1) Present the solution to a problem
2) Present and justify an opinion
3) Compare and contrast evidence, opinions and implications
4) Evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or an argument

Note: Candidates may write on the question paper but this cannot be taken from the test room and will not be seen by the examiner. Answers must be given on the answer sheet and must be written in full. Notes are not acceptable as answers.

Assessment of the Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of organisational and cohesive devices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a clear introduction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The paragraphs in the body are logically structured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connectives and conjunctions effectively link sentences and paragraphs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The conclusion is appropriate.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideas/development of ideas/examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is an appropriate number of relevant ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideas are developed in a clear and logical manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideas are supported with relevant examples.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sentence structures/mechanics of writing/vocabulary.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A range of sentence structures is used accurately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanics errors are not intrusive.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An appropriate range of words is used accurately.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Skills required for successful completion of Task Two

- Understanding and paraphrasing the topic
- Planning
- Understanding the instructions

Describing facts and figures

Explain to the students that being able to understand and describe information or data is an important academic skill. IELTS writing tasks test student ability to describe factual information, presented in graphic and diagrammatic form, clearly and accurately. Further clarify for students that a fact is different from an opinion because it is objective and often involves measurement.

**A. Exercise** – Have the students find out some factual information about their peers or their friends and family. Have them ask how many of them enjoy the following activities. Have the students put a checkmark beside each activity the people like doing and have them write the total in the **Total** column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martial arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turn the table into a bar chart by providing an example of your own or by using one of the student’s charts.

Make some factual statements about the data. Try to use the following structures:

- Number (e.g. five out of ten) students enjoy
- Percentage (e.g. 50 per cent of) students enjoy
- General (e.g. the majority of/a large number of/most/very few/hardly any) students enjoy

Have the students work in groups to make their own bar/pie charts and statements.

**B. Pie Charts** – Alternatively, have a pie chart available with corresponding statements that students need to verify by checking the statistical information on the chart.

This pie chart shows how a young woman spends her money.
1. Tomoko spends an equal amount of money on rent, food, entertainment and study materials.
2. Tomoko spends 45 percent of her money on rent and food, but she only spends 15 percent of her money on study materials.
3. Tomoko spends more on clothes than she spends on study materials.
4. Tomoko spends as much money on rent and food as she does on everything else put together.

**Describing Trends**

Similar exercises are done with line graphs and tables wherein trends and patterns are illustrated and students are asked to extract significant information from them. Vocabulary necessary to successfully complete these types of exercises is found in the following outline:

**Nouns**

- A rise
- An increase
- A fall
- A drop
- A decline
- A peak/dip

**Adjectives and Adverbs**

- sharp(ly)/dramatically
- considerable(ly)
- stead(ily)
- slight(ly)/gentle(ly)
- gradual(ly)
- relative(ly)

**Phrase**

- remain the same
- reach a plateau
- remain stable
- remain/stay constant
- reach a peak
- hit/fall to the lowest point

**Summarising data**

Tell students that in the IELTS test there may be a lot of information which they are asked to describe in a limited number of words. Summarising, or selecting the appropriate details and organising them in a relevant way, is an important skill to learn for this unit of the writing module.

**Exercise** – Selecting important information. Students are given a bar graph that illustrates certain information on a particular topic. They are asked to answer representative questions such as the following:

1. Write one sentence which says what the graph shows.
2. Write two sentences that give overall information about the graph.
3. Write a fourth sentence about “X”.
4. Write a fifth sentence about “Y”.
5. Write a sixth sentence about “Z”,

Have students exchange their answers with a partner and discuss the features they chose to describe.
Comparing Data

Students need to know that when they interpret information from graphs, tables and charts they will need to compare and contrast, and for that they need certain vocabulary. IELTS examiners look to see how student responses are structured, how well ideas are connected, and look for appropriate use of the following vocabulary:

**To contrast**
- while
- whereas
- however
- on the other hand
- even so
- nevertheless
- less . . . than

**To compare**
- more . . . than
- different from
- differ(ence)
- although
- in contrast to
- conversely
- unlike

**Describing a process**

IELTS students are often asked to describe a process from a picture as part of the Academic Writing Module. Take the students through this process step by step:

- Have students examine the picture carefully until they understand it.
- If it is a process, look carefully at the beginning and the end.
- Have them come up with an opening sentence that summarises the overall process.
- Have students in pairs describe the process verbally, in their own words, to one another.
- Have them prepare for writing a description by brainstorming some of the verbs that will be used in the answer. Suggest some connectives that can be used to coherently join sentences and ideas. Ask students to decide on a particular verb tense as well.
- Give them a set period (20 minutes) to complete their written exercise.

**Sample Task Descriptions for Teachers**

**Single line graph**

**Task description:** The task consists of a single line. You (the student) are required to describe the information given in the graph in 150 words. You should spend no more than 20 minutes on the task.

What is being tested is your ability to:

- organise and present the data
- compare trends
- use suitable language to describe the graph.

**Sample candidate/student answer:**

The graph shows the number of divorce cases in New Zealand between the years 1800 and 2000. As an overall trend, it is clear that the number of cases increased fairly rapidly until the mid-fifties. It remained constant before increasing rapidly for sixty years. In 1850, the number of cases stood approximately at 200K. That number rose steadily to 400K by 1900 and then remained constant until 1950. Before increasing sharply in 1970. From the graph it is likely that the trend would
be the same. That is, there would be a sharp increase. In conclusion, the graph shows that the number of divorce cases steadily increases.

Teacher/Examiner Comments:

The report structure is easy to follow. There is evidence of a clear introduction, body and conclusion. The candidate uses cohesive words to connect pieces of information such as 'until' and 'before'. The candidate uses a variety of grammatical structures though mostly compound sentences and a wide range of vocabulary. In terms of task requirements the report is a little short. Score - 28/40.

Pie chart

Task description

The task is a pie chart. In 150 words you are required to draft a report to describe the information given in a graph. There is no need to give your opinion. It is recommended you keep within the twenty-minute time frame.

What is being tested is your ability to:

• organise and present the data
• compare trends
• use suitable language to describe the graph.

Sample candidate/student answer:

The pie chart compares the job satisfaction among five different professions. The highest level of job satisfaction is achieved by mechanics, which is about 35% in Regina, in Canada. It can be clearly seen that housewives received the minimum satisfaction. Teachers and doctors have an equal level of job satisfaction, which is 20%. The nurse sector receives the next job satisfaction level. In conclusion, we can see that the mechanics have the maximum job satisfaction and the housewives the least.

Teacher/Examiner Comments:

The report structure is clear and well-organised with an introduction, body and conclusion. The candidate uses minimum variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary so that the writing is repetitive. In terms of task requirements, the report does not meet the word limit. Although the candidate has included every figure presented in the charts, the answer is underdeveloped. The sample answer above is, therefore, a low average one. Score – 19/40.

Double line graph

Task description

The task consists of two lines. You are required to describe the information given in the graph in 150 words. It is recommended you keep within the twenty-minute time frame.

What is being tested is your ability to:

• organise and present the data
• compare trends
• use suitable language to describe the graph.
Sample Candidate/Student Answer 1:

In 1840, the number was almost same in both the countries that was around 100K. In 1880 there wasn't much change in Sri Lanka. This trend remained constant until 1960. In other words there is slight variation from the years 1840 until 1960. In contrast, the number of divorce cases in Australia was low in 1840 that was about 100K. This number increased to almost 6 times by 1900 and remained stable until 1940. It increased again but more steeply to 800K in 1960.

Teacher/Examiner Comments:

The report structure lacks a clear introduction with the statistics of the graph (should include who and when) and lacks a statement summing up the main trends. The report also lacks any conclusion. The candidate uses a variety of grammatical structures but not a wide range of vocabulary. In terms of task requirements, the report is short. Although there is neither introduction nor conclusion, the body of the report does describe the graph well. Score 18/40

Sample Candidate/Student Answer 2:

The graph shows the number of divorce cases in Australia and Sri Lanka. In 1840, the number was almost same in both the countries which was around 1000's. In 1880 there wasn't much change in Sri Lanka. This trend remained constant until 1960. In other words there is slight variation from the years 1840 until 1960. In contrast the number of divorce cases in Australia was low in 1840 which was about 100K. This number increased to almost 600 K by 1900 and remained stable until 1940. It increased again but more steeply to 800K in 1960. In conclusion we can see that the number of cases in Sri Lanka remained constant whereas in Australia there is a sharp increase.

Teacher/Examiner Comments:

There is a clear introduction and conclusion. The candidate uses a variety of grammatical structures but not a wide range of vocabulary. Score 32/40.

Bar Graph

Task description:

One or more bar graphs will be given. You are required to describe the information given in the graph in 150 words. There is no need to give your opinion. It is recommended you keep within the twenty-minute time frame.

What is being tested is your ability to:

- organise and present the data
- compare trends
- use suitable language to describe the graph.

Sample Candidate/Student answer:
The graph compares the change in personality in different age groups. A particular trait, which is selfish attitude, is compared. During the age group of 7-10 it is very minimum which is 10%. It doubles in the age group of 10-15 which is equal to the age group of 45-50. Age group of 15-20 is same as age group of 40-45. The selfish nature increases slightly in the age group of 20-25 and peaks at 35 in the age group of 25-30.

In conclusion it is clear that there is a gradual increase up to the age of 25-30 followed by a steady decline as the age increases.

Teacher/Examiner Comments:

The report structure is clear and well laid out. There is evidence of an introduction, body and conclusion. The candidate uses a variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary so that the writing is not repetitive. In terms of task requirements, the report meets the word limit. The sample answer above is therefore a very good one. Score 32/40

Tables

Task description:

You will be given one table of figures. Your task is to write a 150-word report to describe the information given in the table. It is recommended you keep within the twenty-minute time frame.

What is being tested is your ability to:

• organise and present the data
• compare trends
• use suitable language to describe the graph

Nationality of immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>British</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Sri Lankan</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>8000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Candidate/Student answer:

The table shows the number of immigrants from the year 1500-2000 from 5 different countries. In 1500 the number of African and Sri Lankans were 10 and 50 respectively, which compared to British and Chinese are very less.

In 1600 The British immigrants almost doubled like Africans. There was a slight increase in Sri Lankans which went up to 75. In contrast Chinese increased four times and reached 400. In 1700 the British went up to 1300 and Africans 180 and Chinese 500. There was a very slight increase in Sri Lankans which went up to 500. In 1800 the British number doubled like Chinese. In Africans it increased threefold and Sri Lankan number showed slight increase. In 1900 the British reached the figure of 2800 Africans 2000 Sri Lankans 120 and Chinese increased three folds. In 2000 British showed slight increase Africans increased one. There is slight change in
Sri Lankans and Chinese number doubled. In conclusion the number of immigrants from Britain showed gradual increase. Sri Lankan showed a very slight change over the years. African showed a sudden increase in the year 1800. Chinese showed dramatic increase from the years 1500 to 2000.

Teacher/Examiner Comments

The report structure is clear and well-organised with an introduction, body and conclusion. The candidate uses repetitive grammatical structures and vocabulary, which would bring the mark down considerably. The tense used is not appropriate, as there is no indication on the table that the figures refer to the past (in a few places).

In terms of task requirements the report has serious problems. Although in writing about table information students will have difficulty with the amount of information to put into a 150 word report, the student can't solve this problem by writing all the details. The candidate has exceeded the word limit. In this case the candidate could have compared the noticeable changes and ignored the rest. Score 15/40

Process Diagrams

Task description:

You will be given a diagram of a process. Your task is to write a 150-word report to describe the information given in the diagram. It is recommended you keep within the twenty-minute time frame. This task doesn't appear often on the IELTS test.

What is being tested is your ability to:

• Describe each important stage in the process and expand where necessary
• Link your descriptions of each stage
• Use the present simple passive

Sample task: You should spend about 20 minutes on this task. Write a report describing the information in the flow chart below. The flow chart shows the complaint process procedures.

Sample candidate/student answer:

"Firstly, the situation is discussed by the complaint staff. The complaint could be withdrawn or referred to another agency. If the complaint were withdrawn no action would be taken. After a preliminary investigation the complaint will be thoroughly investigated by Commission staff who will prepare a report for the Commissioners and the parties. Complaint could be rejected by the director if it is invalid. Then this would go to Commissioners, which could be dismissed. If there is sufficient evidence of discrimination the complaint will be referred back to staff for settlement. If not, the complaint will be dismissed. Informal resolutions will be encouraged by the Commissioners and will be supported at any stage of the process. If the complaint is not settled it will be sent to Board of Adjudication. Finally the Board of Adjudication will go for another appeal."

After the papers are collected, the Reading and Listening papers are marked by any administrator and then collated. The writing papers are treated differently. After collection, the writing papers are marked by an examiner. The marks are then sent to an administrator for collection while the exam papers are sent to an examination board. The board either stores the papers or reassesses them.
There is a clear introduction. Passive verbs are used accurately; however, there is no variety in the use of sequencing words and they are repetitive. The student covers all stages of the process, but the essay exceeds the word limit. Score 22/40.

B. General Training Writing Module

Sixty minutes are allotted to the General Training Writing Module in which there are two tasks to complete. It should be suggested to students that they spend twenty minutes on Task One that requires candidates to write at least 150 words. Task Two requires at least 250 words and should take the student around forty minutes.

Task One – Write a letter.

Topics are of General Interest.
Minimum number of Words: 150
Time Recommended: 20 minutes

Task Two – Write an essay.

Topics are of general interest and knowledge
Minimum number of words: 250
Time Recommended: 40

Explanation of General Training Module

In Task One, candidates are asked to respond to a given problem with a letter requesting information or explaining a situation. Depending upon the task suggested, candidates are assessed on their ability to:

a) Engage in personal correspondence
b) Elicit and provide general factual information
c) Express needs, wants, likes and dislikes
d) Express opinions, views, complaints, etc.

In Task Two, candidates present their point of view. Candidates are assessed on their ability to:

a) Provide general factual information
b) Outline a problem and present a solution
c) Present and possibly justify an opinion, assessment or hypothesis
d) Present and possibly evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence and argument

In some tests there is a thematic link between the two tasks but topics are of a general interest and it makes no difference what subjects candidates study. Suitable topic areas include: travel, accommodation, current affairs, shops and services, health and welfare, occupational health and safety, recreation, social and physical environment.

Part of the task completion for students is to respond appropriately in terms of comprehension, rhetorical organisation, style and content. Appropriate responses are: personal, semi-formal, formal correspondence, as in Task One, and short essays or general reports addressed to course tutors or examiners, as in Task Two.

No specialist knowledge is expected of the candidates and each task is assessed independently. The instructions are clear and easy to follow.

Hints for Teaching the Writing Module for Test Preparation
1. Make sure students understand that they need to define their topic. Ask them to ensure that they know what
they are writing about. Sometimes questions can be ambiguous and, if so, they need to be clarified.

2. Ensure that students understand all the words in their assignment. Encourage them to look them up in a
dictionary. It is a good idea for students to write the title in their own words to check for understanding and
clarity.

3. Allow students plenty of time to complete the assignment. Essays should not be written in one go. Allow time
to write between drafts and to actively think about what has been written.

4. Encourage students to use their time efficiently. Have them prepare all writing materials and their workspace.

5. Encourage and show students how to work out the main body of the assignment as the first step of a draft,
rather than completing the introduction first. The introduction can be drafted after the main body and at this stage
is more easily linked to the main idea/s in the essay.

6. As time is a factor in IELTS examinations, encourage students to use strategies like rephrasing. For example,
if the question reads, “Discuss the various stages of development in middle childhood” the student can simply
start by saying, “In this essay the various stages of development in middle childhood will be discussed” or even
more simply, “In this essay I will discuss…"

7. Encourage and work with students to ensure that their essay is clear and logically laid out. Show them how to
put their point of view forward clearly and to tell the reader how they are going to argue their case. Linking
paragraphs with each other ensures that the writing does not jump from one idea to another without a logical
sequencing. Linking strategies include:

• Adding to the ideas you have – again, also, then, furthermore, already stated, in addition to.
• Cause and effect – accordingly, as a result, otherwise, consequently
• Comparison – also, in the same way, similarly, as well as
• Concession – admittedly, however, although
• Contrast – on the other hand, nonetheless, but, notwithstanding
• Enumeration – first, next, moreover, to begin with, second, third, later, earlier
• Conclusion – in conclusion, to sum up, thus, finally, lastly

8. Tell students that their conclusion should bring together all parts of the essay. The concluding paragraph
briefly summarises the main points of the essay, pointing out why what the author/student has said is significant.

Discussing the implications of the essay is also common in a concluding paragraph or briefly mentioning other
points that need to be looked at further.

9. Finally, the introduction can be written because the student now has all the information needed to do so. Here
the reader is told:

• What the student understands the topic to mean
• The main argument
• What issues they will discuss
• What the conclusion will say

Situational Writing Preparation

In the IELTS General Module, students will be called upon to illustrate their skill in writing for specific situations,
for example, writing a letter in an appropriate style in order to achieve a certain outcome. In this sense, focus on
accuracy, detail, purpose, and clarity are important areas of concern for the student. The task will present a situation to the student and they are required to respond in the first person as if they were in the situation presented to them.
For example:

**Situation**

You recently went shopping at the local supermarket. When you got home and studied your bill you found that you had been charged for items you did not purchase.

**Task description**

Write a letter to the supermarket manager explaining what has happened. Tell the manager how you feel about the error and ask him to do something about it.

**Hint for students**

Have them underline the verbs in this task that express what they have to do.

**Purpose**

It is important for students to remember that a letter is a form of communication and that this kind of letter is always written with a very specific purpose in mind. Go over what is meant by 'purpose' with the students. Give some examples; for instance, here the purpose is to perhaps get the money back for items charged but not purchased. Ask the students what sort of things may prevent a letter from achieving its purpose? These might include: incorrect address, incorrect addressee or purpose not stated clearly.

**Starting the Task**

A letter should open with something that is appropriate to the reader and that will capture their attention. There are structures we can offer our students to help them out:

a) I am writing with regard to/in connection with . . .  
b) I am writing to express my concern/dissatisfaction . . .  
c) I would like to draw your attention to . . .

Ask the students to interpret the tone of the above opening structures. Ask them to contrast this style and tone with writing to apologise to a friend. Have them brainstorm some opening structures for this and other styles of letters.

**Another Task:** Hand out the following cards with situations on them that require a follow-up letter. Discuss with the students the purpose of each of the letters.

- **A.** A letter to the gas company about a second bill (or reminder) you received when you had already paid the first.
- **B.** A letter to a close relative with an invitation to a surprise party.
- **C.** A letter to an old teacher asking for a reference for a job.
- **D.** A letter to a garage about some poor mechanical work they did on your car.

Have students write up opening sentences for the above letters.

**Explaining the Situation:** It is important for the students to know that in letter writing, the writer provides clear and sufficient background information to support the purpose of the letter.
Hints for students: Tell them that they must use their imagination for this task. Tell them to be as realistic as they can. Ask students to copy the bubble diagram and to replace the bubbles with the detailed and realistic information. Remind them to consider their verb tenses and order of presentation of material.

The Message

Remind students that once they have stated their purpose clearly and given the reader some background information, they are to continue with their message. Explain to students that tone and level of formality will affect how successful they are in communicating their message.

How to express feelings in a letter:

A. Dissatisfaction/Dislike
   I am unhappy about/do not like . . .
   I am not comfortable about/with . . .
   . . . is not what I expected/was expecting
   . . . does not suit me/my needs
   . . . is too + adjective

B. Regret/apology
   I’m sorry that . . .
   I regret that I . . .
   Please accept my apologies for . . . ing
   Please forgive me for . . .
   Unfortunately/Regrettably I . . .

C. Needs/wants/desires
   What I am looking for is . . .
   What would suit me best is . . .
   I am very keen to . . .
   I would very much like to . . .
   I would be grateful if you could . . .

D. Gratitude
   Thank you very much for . . .
   I very much appreciate . . .
   I’m grateful to you for . . .

E. Annoyance
   Although I stated that . . .
   Despite my request for . . .
   Even though I telephoned you about . . .

F. Pleasure/satisfaction
   I was delighted about/by
   I thoroughly enjoyed . . .
   . . . was very impressive/enjoyable

Making requests, suggestions, etc.

Mention to students that they may have to request or suggest something in their letter. Hand out the following list and have students study it for a few moments. Ask them what they notice about the left hand list. Discuss with students how a reader might react to some of these statements.
Another Task: Ask students to rewrite some of the messages in the left-hand list using structures from the right hand list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left Hand List</th>
<th>Right Hand List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Send me a brochure.</td>
<td>I would like to . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want a ticket for tonight’s show.</td>
<td>I am very interested in . . . ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think you should employ more staff.</td>
<td>Could I suggest that . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should give up smoking.</td>
<td>Please avoid . . . ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion you should improve your service.</td>
<td>Wouldn’t it be better if you . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to get a place at your school.</td>
<td>I would be grateful if you/I could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t stand your car alarm.</td>
<td>Please would you/Could you please . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You park your car too close to me.</td>
<td>I would recommend that you . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is your information always out of date?</td>
<td>I would appreciate it if . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continuing Task: Now have students write the second part of their letter, stating how they feel about the supermarket error and ask the manager to do something about it.

Exercise – Process Writing

Preparation: Divide the class into four groups.

Task Description: To write a descriptive paragraph of how to make a simple dish, e.g. scrambled eggs, noodles, steamed fish.

The Method: The paragraph must be between six to eight sentences, each sentence on a separate line. The simple present must be used. Sequence expressions should be included. Do not write the name of the dish or recipe.

The Execution: When each group has finished, have one student cut up the group’s paper, so that each sentence is on a separate piece of paper. Give the sheets to another group to put into the correct order. The group also has to guess the name of the dish. Each group is given a new paragraph until all have been unscrambled.

Exercise – IELTS Writing

Students should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

Description: You (the student) have a friend who lives in a city abroad. You have decided that you would like to apply to do a course at one of the colleges in this city. Write to your friend explaining what you would like to do. Tell them what type of work or studies you have been doing for the past few years and ask for assistance in contacting an appropriate institution.

You should write at least 150 words. You do not need to write your own address. Begin the letter as follows: Dear . . .

Academic and General Training – Further Tasks

1. Understanding the instructions:
   Explain to the students that there are no right or wrong answers to this task, but that they must read the questions carefully and make sure they understand exactly what they have to write about.

2. The introduction to the task:
   Academic: Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic:
General: As part of a class assignment you have to write about the following topic:

3. **After the task description, the instructions state:**

**Academic:** You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

**General:** Give reasons for your answer.

4. **Approaching the task:** Have the students read the following task.

*Enormous effort is put into researching and marketing ‘the perfect potato crisp’ while research into stress at work, for example, is ignored. How important are staff working conditions? Should employers research and improve the working conditions of their staff or should they concentrate more on their product?*

Have the following list on the board and ask students which of the areas would be appropriate to include in their answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a)</th>
<th>A comparison of different types of products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>A discussion of the difficulties of food industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>An analysis of the effects of bad working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>An explanation of how to make potato crisps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e)</td>
<td>An analysis of how to be successful in business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f)</td>
<td>A description of a business you know well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g)</td>
<td>An analysis of the importance of a company’s product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h)</td>
<td>A discussion of how products are manufactured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i)</td>
<td>A discussion of the value of company staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implementing the task in groups:** Now that students have discussed appropriate and inappropriate areas to include in their essay, have them construct a similar list for the following task:

*The age of Information Technology has taken a lot of people by surprise. While it has become a way of life for some, others know very little about it and may be unlikely to learn. Eventually we will have a polarised society and this will lead to serious social problems. To what extent do you agree with this statement?*

Once students have made a list, have each student re-write the task in their own words, following exam guidelines.

**Fulfilling the task alone:** Give each student the following statement and have them complete the writing task as per the guidelines, each on their own. Remind students that they can make a list of pros and cons, they can construct a bubble diagram or they can brainstorm appropriate and important ideas to include in their essay as part of their preparation.

*Have newspapers become a medium of the past or do they still play an important role in people’s lives?*

**Planning a Structure**

Explain to students that in the IELTS examination they will have very little time to plan their answer, but examiners still expect a clear underlying structure to student responses.

**Organising Ideas**

Explain to students that the key to good, clear writing is simplicity. Suggest to them that they not start their introduction until they know what they are going to say. Once they have thought out some relevant ideas, they need to be able to organise them. If students present only a list of ideas with no development in the essay, they will lose marks.

**Preparation Tasks**
Give students the following statement and give them ten minutes to compose a “for/against” chart.

Should parents be obligated to immunise their children against common childhood diseases or do individuals have the right to choose not to immunise their children?

Now have students organise their ideas in preparation for writing. Instruct them to decide which of the ideas in their lists are “key” ideas. Have them decide how many “key” ideas they can reasonably discuss in 250 words. Have them select some supporting points and have them write them underneath the “key” ideas.

The Introduction

Explain the purpose of the introduction to the students: that it gives the reader their first impression of the student’s writing ability. Discuss with the students what they think they should do before writing the introduction. IELTS tasks generally present a discussion topic that is fairly broad and that can be approached by candidates from different backgrounds. One of the things students can do in the introduction is to define what they understand the task to be and how they are going to approach it. Another approach to writing an introduction is to pose a question that the student then explores in the body of the essay. An introduction can also include a sentence stating the student’s position on the topic. Have students write their introduction.

The Conclusion

Like the introduction, examiners will look for an essay that has a clear and definitive conclusion. The importance of conclusions is that they summarise the views for the reader. Discuss how the reader is alerted to the conclusion and what language structures can be used. Have the following on the board available for students:

To sum up, Overall, In the final analysis, In conclusion, To conclude, Ultimately.

Reinforce to students that conclusions are like a final verdict/statement/decision or it can be an impartial statement. Have students write up an appropriate conclusion in forty words.

Introducing Topics and Main Ideas

In the Academic Writing task students are being tested on their ability to produce a clear, logical argument. The General Training writing task normally requires more description than argument, but should still be clearly presented.

Expressing Views

Explain to students that key ideas are what form the basis of the argument. They can often be stated as facts, but if students want to personalise and enrich their argument, certain language structures can help them to achieve this and reinforce what is in fact a personal or general opinion.

I would argue that
People argue that
I firmly believe that
Some people think/say that
It seems to me that
It is understood that
I tend to think that
It is generally accepted that

Mini-Task: Have students write a sentence expressing one of their main ideas/opinions on the following topics:

a. Teenage drivers are unsafe.
b. Air travel should cost less.
c. School uniforms should be compulsory.
d. Books will soon be old fashioned.

Making Concessions
Explain to students that another style of argument that is not too dogmatic is that of admitting other arguments.

Linking words such as **while, although, despite the fact that** are useful to students. Adverbs such as **admittedly, certainly** can also be used.

**Task:** Have the following chart available as a handout to students and let them have a look at it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV &amp; Children</td>
<td>Educational programs</td>
<td>Adverts targeted at children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safe “baby-sitting”</td>
<td>Too much violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women working vs. staying at</td>
<td>Children benefit from nurseries and day care</td>
<td>Young children need to be with their mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many cars in cities</td>
<td>Build more roads</td>
<td>More car users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have students imagine that they are in the “against” column and instruct them to write a short paragraph on each topic. Have them begin with a sentence that contains the main argument and then remind them to clarify their views by making a concession.

Provide an example for students to follow, such as: **As far as I can tell, television has few benefits for children. While I agree that there are some good educational programs these days, far too much advertising is targeted at children and this makes television viewing very undesirable.**

**Refuting an Argument**

Explain to students that refuting an argument is a forceful way of expressing oneself and is done by rejecting an argument that you do not agree with. Have the following list available that shows examples of structures that can be used when refuting:

- I am unconvinced that
- I don’t believe that
- It is unjustifiable to say that
- It is hard to accept that
- There is little evidence to support the

**Mini Task:**

Have the students express their views on the following topics by rejecting the first argument and then asserting the second argument, as in the following statement: **I don’t believe that politicians should be paid high salaries. They are simply employed to do a job like anybody else.**

a. Politicians should be paid high salaries  b. A job like anybody else
a. Internet is a useful resource for children  b. Too much uncensored material
a. Running is good for you  b. Many physical injuries
a. Gambling should be banned  b. Useful revenue in tax

**Defining and Explaining**

Explain to students that sometimes defining just what they mean is an important addition to a written essay. The following structures can be given to students to add to their language toolbox:

*By... I mean*

*In other words*
**To be more precise**

*By this I mean*

*That is to say*

*Here I’m (not) referring to*

**Mini-Task:**

Have students add an additional sentence to the following by incorporating some of the expressions above:

a. In my opinion, extended families are more successful than nuclear families.
b. It is often said that young people are more tolerant than old people.
c. I am convinced that an element of choice is important in the school curriculum.
d. Job commitment is not always the key to success.

Have students read their sentences aloud and discuss their structure and content.

**Developing an Argument**

In the second IELTS writing task, examiners will look for main arguments that are clearly and well supported. The following can be used as language structure supports in addition to some of those mentioned earlier:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For example</th>
<th>Indeed</th>
<th>Firstly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For instance</td>
<td>In fact</td>
<td>Let me illustrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course</td>
<td>Naturally</td>
<td>If this were the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my experience</td>
<td>A good example of this is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mini-Task:**

Have students link the following arguments using an appropriate expression from the list above. Encourage them to use a different expression in each case.

1. It is impossible to predict what type of holiday people will be taking in 100 years’ time. We don’t know, __________, whether space travel will be a realistic option in the future. ______________, it is likely to completely transform the traditional view of a holiday.

Remember that the purpose of the IELTS Writing test is to assess student skill in the following areas:

**Interpreting graphs, charts, tables and other graphic information (Academic)**
- writing about facts and trends
- comparing and/or contrasting information

**Writing a well-structured argument**
- planning carefully
- demonstrating a well-organised answer with good paragraphing

**Engaging in personal correspondence (General)**
- explaining a situation
- communicating a message

**Presenting a clear point of view**
- clarifying main ideas
- supporting arguments
- giving personal experience/reasons

**Organising information**
- selecting important points/information
**Teaching Vocabulary**

Teaching vocabulary is always an integral part of language teaching, at every level of acquisition, and IELTS is no exception. The two main questions in teaching IELTS preparation are:

What do students need to know? And how do you choose what vocabulary to teach?

**Factors influencing choice of vocabulary are:**

a) The syllabus  

b) Student level, i.e. lower level gets more coverage  

c) First language similarities and shadowing (e.g. *Librería* is not *library*; *embarazada* is not *embarrassed*)  

d) Are the words for active use or recognition?  

e) How much is reasonable in a lesson?

**In general, we teach vocabulary:**

- As the focus of the lesson to introduce, revise and practise vocabulary for active use  
- As pre-taught vocabulary; i.e. vocabulary to enable students to do reading, listening and language practice tasks  
- Post skills vocabulary work; i.e. to follow up comprehension on reading, listening text work and to build on passive vocabulary  
- As it comes up in class; i.e. when students ask about a word or need a word to communicate.

**There are two basic approaches to teaching vocabulary:**

1. Teacher-based wherein the teacher elicits target words using visuals, photos, whiteboard, sketches, realia, mime or gesture accompanied by verbal illustrations.  
2. Task-based wherein students do a task to focus on the target language.
Unit 4 – Activities

You will need to download material from the Student Centre, IELTS elective, to complete this task, but you don’t need to be online to do the task.

IELTS Writing Test

For this task, you will do an authentic IELTS writing test.

You will need: a pen; a printed copy of the Practice Test - Writing and of the answer sheet. Alternatively, you could have the Practice Test document open on your screen and write the answers on a separate sheet of paper.

We will provide you with the correct answers in the Activities for Unit 5. You DO NOT submit this task.

Good luck!
Unit 5 – Speaking

The IELTS Speaking Examination assesses a student’s ability to speak about themselves as well as on a range of topics and issues of social relevance. The IELTS Speaking test takes the form of a one-to-one interview. There are three parts to the speaking test, which allow the student to demonstrate their spoken English skills through a number of tasks. The whole interview takes between twelve and fourteen minutes. The following is an overview of the speaking test format showing the three different units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>The Candidate has an opportunity to speak on familiar topics. The examiner asks a number of questions to which the candidate should reply as fully as possible.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2</th>
<th>The Candidate is asked to give a short talk for 1-2 minutes on a topic chosen by the examiner. The candidate has a minute to prepare and then speaks on the topic without stopping.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual long turn</td>
<td>3-4 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3</th>
<th>The Candidate is presented with more abstract questions broadly linked to the topic introduced in Part 2 and is encouraged to engage in discussion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-way discussion</td>
<td>4-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Examiner’s Role

IELTS examiners are EFL teachers who have been trained to rate spoken English on the IELTS scale. They are also chosen by their personality—to be helpful, encouraging and non-threatening on the day of the exam so that candidates are provided with an optimal environment for success. The examiners rate the student’s language on a scale of 1-9 in four broad areas. They are looking to see if students can:

- Speak fluently and link ideas coherently
- Demonstrate a range of appropriate vocabulary
- Use accurate grammar and appropriate register
- Speak so that they can be understood

The Candidate’s Role

Part One

The examiner will ask the student some questions about them and their interests, studies or working life. They should:

- Reply by offering a full and appropriate response in each case, taking the initiative where possible.
- Always offer more than yes or no answers as the examiner can only rate what s/he hears, and students need to take this opportunity to illustrate their skills.
- Use Part 1 to overcome any nervousness and to demonstrate their basic fluency.

Part Two
The examiner will give the student a topic, which is also written on a card, and will hand the student some paper and a pencil to make notes. Students have one minute to think about what they are going to say. They should:

- Think about the topic for a minute and decide how they are going to tackle it.
- Use the preparation time to jot down some key ideas.
- Make the talk interesting and lively.

**Part Three**
The examiner will invite the student to discuss a number of issues, broadly related to the topic in Part Two. They should:

- Try to give informed, interesting and appropriate responses, but remind them that there is no right or wrong answer.
- Use this part of the test to demonstrate control of the language, ability to express abstract ideas, and to support opinions appropriately.
- Show a willingness to provide extended replies.

**The Interview**
In Part One of the interview the examiner will introduce themselves to the student and ask them their name and for photo identification. The examiner will then ask the student some questions focusing on areas such as interests and hobbies, studies, or working life and career. Students need to offer interesting responses and to show that they can develop their answers. Students are not supposed to provide a point of view or argue a case at this stage of the test.

**Becoming more fluent**
Fluency in speaking is the ability to maintain a flow of language without unnatural hesitation and without demanding unreasonable patience of the listener. It is the ability to “keep going” and includes a number of small strategies such as willingness to participate and preparedness to respond fully to questions asked by the examiner. Becoming fluent takes much practice, and for language students under pressure, even more so. Encourage your students to practise with their friends, colleagues, and in the public sphere as much as possible.

**Exercise** – Provide a table for students and have them complete all the categories with a few key words. When finished, have students circulate amongst each other and ask questions based on the table. Remind them to use the simple present when forming the questions. After a few moments and a few interviews, have students report back to the class by having individual students tell the class what they learned about the people they interviewed. Encourage them to be as flowing in their answer as possible. For example:

*I spoke to Kamiko. She lives in Kyoto and has one brother. Her favourite food is sashimi but she also really likes New Zealand pies. She speaks Japanese fluently, of course, and English as well. In Kyoto she practises Tai Chi but here in New Zealand she is learning to canoe and enjoys her time on the water.*

**Willingness to participate and expand**

**Practice** – have students think of some of the little things that they did over the weekend. Have them write them down in note form but not show them to anyone else. Encourage students to write down at least five activities, using the simple past tense.

For example:

- Went shopping
- Played soccer
- Rented a video
- Telephoned my parents
- Did my laundry
- Went to a cafe
- Went to the gym
- Had dinner with a friend
- Slept in late
- Washed the dog
For each activity that students write down, ask them to think of several sentences that expand on the topic to make it more interesting for a listener. Now have students break into partners and have them ask each other, reminding them to use the five WH-questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? After the person answers, instruct the partner to ask another question, until they have asked six questions for each topic. Instruct them to change roles.

Have the following ideas available in balloon form as below. Read each thought individually and then read how they are linked together to form one cohesive idea. Then say them aloud again so that students hear how they sound natural and flow smoothly.

**Question: Do you have any brothers or sisters?**

I have only one brother.
My brother is older than me.
My brother studies at the university.
My brother is studying economics.

**Answer: I have an older brother who is studying economics at university.**

Have students practise linking individual sentences by using the expressions provided.

1. I need to learn English. English is very important. English will help me to get an interesting job. I want to work in the tourism industry.  
   because, if  
   which, and

2. I work in a bank. I am a bank teller. Working in a bank can be interesting/boring. Many people do their banking by telephone or on the Internet now.  
   although  
   as, which , but

3. Tennis is a wonderful game. To play tennis well you have to be very determined. I enjoy playing tennis. I enjoy watching tennis.  
   because, but,  
   and, as well as

4. I live in an apartment. The apartment is small. I would like to have a larger place to live. One day I will.  
   at the moment,  
   which, but, hopefully

5. Take-away food is very popular in many countries. Take-away food is bad for our health. Take-away food is expensive. Cooking at home is more sensible.  
   even though  
   because

6. My school was very large. There were hundreds of children at my school. It was impossible to know everyone at the school. I did not know all of the teachers.  
   and, because,  
   even

7. I love movies. I like watching the TV. I don’t like live theatre. I don’t like opera.  
   while, but,  
   however, and, either
8. I swim/run to keep fit. Keeping fit is important. People who are not fit run the risk of getting ill. It is difficult to study if you are not well.

**which, if, unless**

**Speaking Portfolios**

Every student needs to prepare a speaking portfolio in order to maximise the content of his or her Speaking Examination.

**Purpose of the Portfolio**

The portfolio gives the student the opportunity to learn speeches in response to common questions that can be useful in practising pronunciation, intonation, and connected-speech as these features are key in the speaking examination.

Student level of vocabulary – the language that the student is able to use actively in narrative situations such as the speaking examination is very important and must be practised as accuracy and precision are marked.

The grammatical and syntactical structures of oral speech are also important to the speaking examination. It is important that students eliminate common errors of inter-language, e.g. thinking in Mandarin and then speaking in English. Teachers should prepare students by working on oral competency in areas of tenses, conditional sentences, modal verbs, voice and reported speech. Two common areas that students need work on are the proper use of articles and prepositions.

**Sample Portfolio Exercises – Part One: Response to Basic Questions**

**A. Response to basic questions about hometown or study.**

Hometown
1) Tell me about your hometown.
2) What is your hometown famous for?
3) I’d like to know if your hometown has changed much over the years.
4) If I were coming to your hometown, what places would you recommend I visit?
5) What are the ways of getting about in your hometown?

Study
1) Tell me about your studies.
2) What exactly do you enjoy about your studies?
3) What are some of the things you do not like about studying?
4) Is studying in China/Taiwan/Japan etc. different from studying in New Zealand/Australia? Describe how it is different.
5) Briefly describe your future study.
6) Say exactly how your studies will affect your future.

**B. Response to basic questions about your life (Two topics such as the following are given in examinations).**

Friends
1) How much time do you spend with them?
2) What do you do together?
3) Do you prefer spending time with friends or family?
4) Do you have one or two close friends or several?
5) Is friendship very important to you?
Travel
1) Have you done much travelling in your life?
2) What were the places you enjoyed visiting?
3) What do you enjoy doing in a new place?
4) Which is better – travelling on your own or with friends?

Special Occasions
1) What are the special days that you celebrate in your country?
2) Which is your favourite festival?
3) Do people usually spend these days with family or with friends?
4) What do people do to celebrate on this occasion?
5) Has the way in which people celebrate it changed in recent times, and how?

Entertainment
1) Do you prefer relaxing at home or going out at night?
2) What do you like to do when you go out at night?
3) How popular is the above (what you like to do) amongst young people in your country of origin?
4) What kind of entertainment do you like?

Transport
1) What are the different kinds of transport in your hometown or country?
2) Which would you recommend to visitors?
3) Is there a transport problem in your hometown or country?
4) How can these problems be solved?

Names
1) What is the meaning of your name? Does it have a particular meaning?
2) Do you know why you were given that name?
3) Do people change their given name or family name in your country? If so, why?
4) In what ways, if at all, do you think a name is important to a person?

Music
1) What type of music do you enjoy listening to?
2) When do you usually listen to that type of music?
3) Do you think it is better to listen to music alone or with friends? Why?
4) What effects, if any, do you think music can have on people?

A Building
1) Name and describe one important building in your hometown.
2) What does the building look like?
3) Why is the building important to your hometown?
4) Do you go there often? Why?
5) Is it popular with visitors? Why?

Teachers should also prepare students to talk about different aspects of the following topics:

- A piece of equipment
- An environmental problem
- The weather
- A book that they have read
- Learning English
- A well-known person
- A letter they have received or written
- A friend from their school days
- The news
• A person with which they have enjoyed working or studying

**Sample Portfolio Exercises - Part Two: Giving a Short Talk**

In Part Two, students are asked to give a short talk for one to two minutes on a topic chosen by the examiner. They will be given a minute to think about it and to make some notes. Then they will be given two minutes to speak. The examiner will remain silent while students are speaking, but may stop them when their time is up by asking a related question.

Part Two offers an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to keep talking without unnatural hesitations and to demonstrate all manner of speaking skills, including vocabulary, idiom use, pronunciation, stress/intonation and connected speech.

**Preparing the Talk**

The following are examples of topics for Part Two. Notice that there is a topic statement followed by three or four sub-topics or mini-questions that follow it. Have students read the instructions carefully and decide how they are going to approach the topic. Have them think about the topic for a minute. Encourage them to underline any key words (*where, whom, interesting, how you got there*) and any words they think are important. Have them decide on the answer and jot down some key ideas.

For example:

**Notes: for An Interesting Trip**

- Morocco, 1970s, with a school friend
- African French, dress, architecture
- Spain, ferry, train
- Souks, restaurants

Illustrate the several ways to open a topic with students, including:

- I'd like to talk about…
- I've chosen to talk about…
- I'm going to talk about…
- I've travelled to quite a few places, but one place I particularly liked was…
- I've really only ever taken one trip, so I'll talk about that…

**An Interesting Trip**

*Describe an interesting trip you have had.*

Explain where you went and with whom.
Describe why it was interesting.
Detail how you got there.
Recommend some aspects of the trip to the teacher/examiner.

**An Interesting Building**

*Describe an interesting building in your hometown or country.*

Explain why it is interesting.
Detail what its function or purpose is.
Describe its appearance and location.
A Place of Natural Beauty
*Describe a place of natural beauty that impresses you.*

Describe exactly where it is and how you get there.
Detail why you think it is beautiful.
Explain how it makes/made you feel.

**Sample Portfolio Exercises – Part Three: Discussions**

In Part Three, students are presented with more abstract questions. They will be broadly linked to the topic introduced in Part Two and students are here required to participate in a discussion with the examiner. This is an opportunity for students to express an opinion and justify their ideas. Language needs to be accurate as well as appropriate to the situation, e.g. a formal discussion.

**Exploring the Theme**

In the last unit, we looked at exercises aimed at preparing a topic for a talk: *An Interesting Trip*. Have related topics prepared on the topics as outlined on the talk cards and have them divided into sub categories. For example,
- Air travel and safety
- Culture Shock
- Destinations
- Types of travel

Have related questions available for students to read. Instruct them to underline the words that provide a link to the original topic (*An Interesting Trip*). Have them also decide which of the three subcategories the question belongs to.

1. What are the advantages in travelling overland in North Africa?
2. Should travellers prepare before travelling to a new country and if so, why?
3. There is a huge industry around eco-tourism. Why is this type of travel seen to be more beneficial than other types of tourism?
4. Does culture shock really exist anymore with so many people from different parts of the world living together?
5. How can tourism negatively affect a community and its residents?

Now have students imagine that the examiner has asked them these questions and that they have to provide a reasoned and appropriate answer. Have them practise answering, remembering to begin with "I think" or "I don’t think". Have them underline important words, introduce their opinion, provide evidence or backing for that opinion, and have them read answers aloud to make them come alive.

These questions are abstract in nature and test the speculation ability of the students.

1. Suggest why beautiful architecture is important for our cities.
2. Describe a skill that you possess and that you feel good about.
3. Do you predict any changes in the education system in our country? Explain.

**IELTS Speaking Assessment**

Name ____________________________
Date ____________________________
Mark ___________________________/20

The main aim of the speaking task is effective communication.

**Delivery**
Fluency/Intonation
Pronunciation 0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

**Structures**
Accuracy/Variety 0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

**Vocabulary**
Appropriate Use & Range 0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

**Content**
Organisation
Relevance & Depth 0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0

**Strengths**

________________________________________________________________________

**Weaknesses**

________________________________________________________________________

**Recommendations**

_____________________________________________________________________

**Speaking Assessment Explanation**

- **Delivery** – Is the candidate able to comprehend the task and produce acceptable answers?
- **Fluency** – Does the candidate get stuck for words or is there a good flow?
- **Intonation** – Is there proper intonation for questions, etc?
- **Pronunciation** – Is the response comprehensible?
- **Structures** – Is the student grammatically competent?
- **Variety** – Is the candidate using only simple sentences? Are they uncomfortable with compound and complex sentences?
- **Vocabulary** – Does the candidate have a wide range of vocabulary or is it limited?
- **Content and Organisation** – Is the candidate able to organise the ideas?
- **Fluency and Coherence** – This measures student ability to speak without too many pauses and hesitations. It is also to do with how easily and clearly their ideas can be understood.
- **Lexical Resource** – This refers to the use of words and the range and accuracy of the vocabulary students choose to use. Not only how they select words but also how well they use them will be considered.
- **Grammatical Range and Accuracy** – The variety of grammar that the interviewer judges is both the student’s use and how correctly they use it. So, the range of tenses as well as the appropriate use of them is important in all parts of the speaking test.
• Pronunciation – It is not only individual words but also the whole sentences which are considered. The interviewer will be considering how easily they can understand what the candidate is saying.
Unit 5 – Activities

There are no set activities for this unit.

You can download the answer sheet for the Writing Test and a sample IELTS Speaking Test from the online course.
Unit 6 – Setting up an IELTS Preparation Program

You have now studied the kinds of materials and lessons you need to use to develop the students’ skills when teaching IELTS Preparation. You have tried out some IELTS tests yourself, so you will be familiar with what students have to know. This is vitally important if you are going to teach a course some time in the future. If you are asked by your school to develop a program, the first thing to do is to order some Practice Test Books if the school does not already have some. The practice tests used for assessment in this course come from the IELTS 404 package (there is a link to the publisher’s web site at the end of this unit).

The next thing is to do a ‘needs analysis’. The approach for a needs analysis is outlined in the Teaching Business English elective and also in the EAP elective. If you have not done either of these or do not plan to do them, basically, it involves getting information from all the stakeholders (particularly the students and the school) to estimate the required duration of the course and a timetable for it (e.g. 10 weeks at 4 hours a week, or 10 weeks 5 hours a day, etc.) Then, in reference to this course and/or a good IELTS teacher’s text (or indeed, a student text) a curriculum can be developed, taking into account the four test modules and the skills students need to develop for each. Several full practice tests performed under strict exam conditions should be part of the curriculum.

Recommended materials and resources

A great IELTS Resource

Check out ‘404 Essential Tests for IELTS’ if you would like to purchase an excellent IELTS resource, now or after you start your job! Go to: [www.aapress.com.au](http://www.aapress.com.au)

Well done! You have now completed the IELTS course. You should have a thorough understanding of what IELTS testing is, how it’s administered and assessed, and how to prepare your students for the testing. You can now sit the exam.