



Checklist for IELTS Success: Bell's Top Tips

Speaking

Part One

The examiner will ask you some questions about your country, family, studies or hobbies.

✓ Avoid one word answers and instead discuss your answers in as much detail as you can;

Example: 'Where are you from?' 'I'm from Milan in northern Italy. I've lived there most of my life...'

✓ Use this part of the speaking exam to get over any nerves you may be feeling.

Part Two

You will be asked to speak for up to two minutes on a given topic. You will be given one minute to make some notes.

✓ Don't try to write out a full speech or even full sentences in one minute. Make only one word notes to prompt you.

✓ Try to answer the questions *what?, where?, when?, who?, why? and how?* in relation to the topic.

Part Three

The examiner will ask you some questions loosely related to the topic you spoke about in part two.

✓ Try to give full answers. Give your opinion and then give reasons and examples to support your answers.

✓ If you don't understand a specific word, ask the examiner for clarification.

✓ Remember that the examiner is a nice, normal, friendly, cheerful person so there is no need to be scared of him or her.

Writing

You will have 60 minutes to answer two questions.

Part One

- ✓ Write at least **150 words** for part one. If you write significantly less than this, your score will drop one band, so aim to write about 165 words.
- ✓ Spend approximately **20 minutes on part one.**
- ✓ Part one is based on what you understand, not your personal opinion.
- ✓ Make sure your writing is legible.
- ✓ Plan your writing.

Part Two

- ✓ Write at least **250 words for part two.** If you write significantly less than this, your score will drop one band, so aim to write about 280 words.
- ✓ Spend approximately **40 minutes on part two.**
- ✓ In part two, your opinion is required. Give both sides of an argument supported by reasoning. Even if you do not agree with one of the arguments, you should at least acknowledge it.
- ✓ Write a clear introduction and conclusion. The introduction should not repeat the question word for word, but should paraphrase it.

Listening

- ✓ Read through the questions to predict what the listening topic will be about. It will be easier if you have some idea of what you are going to hear.
- ✓ As you read through the questions, underline key words that will help you identify the answer.
- ✓ Try to predict the type of answer that may be required.
- ✓ You may need to paraphrase something that you hear in the text in order for it to fit into a gap in notes or sentences.
- ✓ Follow the instructions closely.
- ✓ If you think that you have missed the answer, carry on to the next questions.
- ✓ If you have any gaps at the end, guess the answer.

Reading

You will have to answer 40 questions, based on three reading texts, and transfer your 40 answers to an answer sheet within 60 minutes. So, it is important to remember the following:

- ✓ Use your skimming and scanning skills effectively.
- ✓ Watch the clock. Allow 20 minutes for each section of the reading:
 - 3 minutes to skim read copy in order to get the main ideas of it
 - 15 minutes scanning and reading to find the answers
 - 2 minutes to transfer your answers to the answer sheet and to check them.
- ✓ Don't leave any gaps - guess the answer if you don't know it.
- ✓ You don't need to read or understand every word of the text in order to answer the questions.
- ✓ Read any titles or subheadings first to try to predict what the text is going to be about.
- ✓ Underline key words in the questions and scan the text to find either key words or paraphrasing of them. You should then be able to find your answer in this part of the text.

With thanks to Marian Greengrass, Teacher at Bell Bedgebury Language Centre