

What is IELTS?

IELTS stands for the International English Language Testing System.

The IELTS exam is now taken by over 1.5 million people every year. It is recognised by universities, companies, professional bodies, immigration authorities, and government institutions all around the world as a measure of English Language ability.

IELTS tests can be taken up to 4 times a month in over 120 countries.

IELTS Scores

There is no pass or fail for the IELTS exam. Instead, you receive a band score between 1 and 9. This may include a half point, such as 6.5 for example.

Most universities typically require a score of around 6.5, though this may be lower or higher depending on the institution and the course being applied for. Some may also demand a minimum score in each of the 4 papers.

You will receive your results 13 days after you take the IELTS test.

IELTS Fees

IELTS test centres set the fees, and therefore these may vary from country to country. However, candidates should expect to pay around £120 GBP, €200 Euros or \$200 USD.

IELTS Exam Format

There are two different types of IELTS exam:

1. The Academic Module. The IELTS Academic module is designed for students who wish to study in English speaking universities at either degree level or postgraduate masters or PhD level. It is also taken by those wishing to work in specific professions, such as medicine or dentistry.
2. The General Training Module. The IELTS General Training module is for those hoping to migrate to the UK, Australia, New Zealand or Canada, or for those hoping to study in an English speaking country below degree level.

For both IELTS modules, there are 4 parts, each one focusing on a specific skill: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The reading and writing sections are different for the 2 modules, whereas the listening and speaking sections are the same.

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IELTS Reading (60 minutes)

1. IELTS Academic module: there are 3 long texts on a variety of academic subjects. They are authentic and taken from newspapers, journals, and so on. They may be factual, analytical or opinion-based.
2. IELTS General Training module: there are a series of shorter, more factual texts – related to living and working in an English speaking country – and one longer, more complex text of general interest. They are also authentic texts and taken from notices, documents, magazines, etc.

In both modules, IELTS candidates have to identify key points, important information, understand meaning, recognise the writer's opinion, and summarise arguments effectively.

IELTS Writing (60 minutes)

1. IELTS Academic module: candidates must write 2 texts. The first piece of writing is a report on some data, such as statistical tables or graphs. The second piece is an essay, in which candidates must respond to an opinion or statement about a particular topic.
2. IELTS General Training module: test-takers must also write 2 texts. The first is a letter written in response to a specific situation. The second is an essay responding to an opinion or statement. The writing here can be more informal than in the Academic module.

IELTS candidates will be marked on a range of criteria. These include whether they have answered the question set, used an appropriate style of language, and organised their thoughts clearly. They will also be marked on grammatical accuracy, range of vocabulary, and their ability to connect ideas, sentences, and paragraphs correctly.

IELTS Listening (30 minutes)

There are 4 texts, 2 of them set in a social context, and 2 in a more educational or academic context. The texts may be conversations, discussions or a monologue. There will be a variety of accents used by the different speakers.

IELTS test-takers will need to listen for specific information, understand the main gist, and understand speakers' opinions and attitudes. There will be a variety of different types of question to answer.

IELTS Speaking (11-14 minutes)

This is a face-to-face speaking test with an IELTS examiner. There are 3 parts to the test. The first is an introductory conversation; in the second, the candidate is given 1 minute to prepare a short presentation on a topic; in the third, the examiner and the candidate will discuss some questions connected with the topic in part 2.



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IELTS speaking candidates are marked on their ability to express themselves clearly and accurately, to answer questions appropriately, their range of grammar and vocabulary, their level of 'naturalness', and their pronunciation and intonation.

The IELTS Speaking Test may take place on a different day to the other parts of the IELTS exam.

Re-taking IELTS tests

If you did not achieve the IELTS score you required, then you can re-take a test as soon as you feel ready to do so. You can take as many tests as you like.

IELTS was created by and is jointly owned by the British Council, the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, and IDP: IELTS Australia.

IELTS with Specialist Language Courses

SLC has brought together some of the best IELTS course providers in the world. Please click on the links to see how we can help you achieve the IELTS score you need.

- ✓ School-based IELTS courses
- ✓ Homestay Tuition IELTS courses
- ✓ Online Tuition IELTS courses
- ✓ Online Self-Study courses

About the Author

Chris Moore is Managing Director of [Specialist Language Courses](#) (SLC), an international business and technical language training consultancy. SLC works with companies around the world to improve their language capabilities. IELTS is now widely used to assess workforce English language skills in different industries, from healthcare to engineering to law.

Please contact Chris on chris@specialistlanguagecourses.com or on +44 1273 900213 to discuss how you can best prepare your workforce for the IELTS test.



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