

IELTS – Frequently Asked Questions

The IELTS exam tests your listening, reading, writing and speaking (LRWS) skills and is graded on a band of 9 for each skill. An overall band score is also awarded on a scale of 9. Usually, students need to score an overall band of 7 to qualify for applications to top-tier universities across the world and an overall band of 6.5 with no band less than 6 for most other universities. For the purpose of immigration, the requirements vary from country to country.

My students are consistently among the top scorers and it gives me immense joy to know that I have played a part in writing their success story. There are various aspects about the IELTS exam that you should be aware of and I will try my best to give comprehensive answers to all your questions. So let us have a detailed discussion about the IELTS examination:

What is the IELTS exam?

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System and it is the most popular English proficiency test in the world. Candidates all over the world attempt this test in order to prove their English proficiency either for pursuing higher studies abroad or for immigrating to another country. Depending on your requirement, you may either have to sit for the IELTS Academic exam or for the IELTS General Training exam.

What is the difference between IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training?

The IELTS Academic exam is taken by aspirants who want to go abroad for higher studies. This exam is accepted by almost all universities globally for under-graduate, post-graduate and Ph.D. courses. Whereas, the IELTS General Training exam is taken by aspirants who are applying to other countries for immigration. The governments of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, besides several other countries, accept the IELTS General Training test as a valid proof of English language proficiency.

Which organization conducts the IELTS exam?

The IELTS exam is conducted by IDP in India.

What is the format of the IELTS exam?

The IELTS exam is divided into four sections, i.e. listening, reading, writing (LRW) and speaking. The LRW test is conducted on one day and the speaking test usually takes place on a separate day. Following is the format for each section:

1. Listening:

The listening section is the same for IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. It consists of 40 questions and the duration is 30 minutes. In the paper-delivered test, candidates get extra time of 10 minutes after the regular time of 30 minutes is over in order to write their answers on the answer sheet. This extra time is not available in the computer-delivered test as the candidates can feed their answers directly into the system while listening. Following is a break-up of the listening section:

<u>Section</u>	<u>Context</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Questions</u>
1	Regular conversation	Calling a tourist office	10
2	Regular monologue	Tourist guide speaking	10

3	Conversation in an academic setting	Students having a discussion	10
4	Academic monologue	A lecture by a professor	10
		Total	40

2. Reading:

The overall structure of the reading section is the same for IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. This section comprises of three sections totaling 40 questions that you should answer in 60 minutes. However, there are some differences between the two examinations as far as the type of passages and the style of asking questions is concerned. These differences are enumerated as follows:

IELTS Academic	IELTS General Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the 3 reading passages are long. • They may be descriptive, analytical or opinion-based. • The passages may include illustrations, diagrams, graphs and flow-charts. • The passages are mostly taken from sources such as newspapers, magazines, journals and books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1 contains 2-3 short passages based on factual information. • Section 2 contains 2 short passages that may be generic or employment-related. • Section 3 contains one long passage that is taken from sources such as company manuals, newspapers and books.

3. Writing:

The writing section in the IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training examinations consists of two tasks that are to be completed in 60 minutes. Task 1 in IELTS Academic involves analysis of a graph, whereas in IELTS General Training it involves writing a formal, semi-formal or informal letter. Task 2 is the same in both the examinations and involves writing an essay. You must note that Task 2 carries a few more marks than Task 1.

There is no separate allocation of time for the two tasks, but since Task 2 has a greater weightage than Task 1, it is advisable to spend around 20 minutes on Task 1 and around 40 minutes on Task 2.

4. Speaking:

The speaking test is the same for IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. It is usually conducted on a separate day that may be one day before or after the LRW test. It is quite short and lasts anywhere from 11 to 14 minutes. The speaking test consists of three sections.

In section 1, the examiner will ask you general questions about your work, education, hobbies or other related topics. You should give a clear, concise answer using examples in four to five sentences. In section 2, you will be given a topic and you will have 60 seconds to prepare a response. Subsequently, you will be asked to speak on that topic

for 1.5 to 2 minutes. Finally, in section 3, the examiner will ask you questions related to your topic in section 2.

How is the IELTS exam scored?

The IELTS exam is scored on a band of 9 points. You will receive a score on a scale of 9 on all the four scoring parameters, viz. listening, reading, writing and speaking. Then the scores are added and divided by four to arrive at an overall band score out of 9 points, rounded up or down to the closest half. Following are the scoring parameters used to evaluate your IELTS exam:

IELTS Academic				IELTS General Training			
Reading		Listening		Reading		Listening	
Questions	Band	Questions	Band	Questions	Band	Questions	Band
39-40	9.0	39-40	9.0	40	9.0	39-40	9.0
37-38	8.5	37-38	8.5	39	8.5	37-38	8.5
35-36	8.0	35-36	8.0	37-38	8.0	35-36	8.0
32-34	7.5	32-34	7.5	36	7.5	32-34	7.5
30-31	7.0	30-31	7.0	34-35	7.0	30-31	7.0
27-29	6.5	26-29	6.5	32-33	6.5	26-29	6.5
23-26	6.0	23-25	6.0	31-30	6.0	23-25	6.0
19-22	5.5	18-22	5.5	27-29	5.5	18-22	5.5
15-18	5.0	16-17	5.0	23-26	5.0	16-17	5.0

You can check the details of the scoring parameters for the writing and speaking modules [HERE](#).

How much do I need to score on the IELTS exam?

The score you need to achieve on the IELTS exam depends on whether you are planning to go abroad for higher studies or for immigration. Following is a table indicating the scores usually required for various purposes:

Reason	Score Required				
Higher Studies (IELTS Academic)	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall
Top Universities	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	7.0
Other Universities	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.5
Immigration (IELTS General Training)					
Canada (Maximum Points)	8.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	-
Australia (Maximum Points)	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	-

For how long is the IELTS score valid?

Your IELTS score will remain valid for 2 years from the date mentioned on your TRF (Test Report Form).

How many re-attempts are allowed for the IELTS exam?

There is no limit on the number of times you can appear for the IELTS exam. You can appear as many as you want in order to achieve your required score. However, you will have to book your exam slot and pay the examination fee to British Council or IDP for every attempt.

What are the documents that I need to carry with me for the exam?

The only document that you need to carry to the examination hall is your passport and an e-mail confirmation of your exam slot. You must carry your ORIGINAL passport for both, the LRW test and the speaking test. This is very important because if you do not carry the original passport, the invigilators will not allow you to take the test and you will not be given any refund of the examination fee either.

Is the IELTS a computer-delivered test or a paper-delivered test?

Both, the IELTS Academic and the IELTS General Training exams are available in paper-delivered as well as computer-delivered formats.

How often is the IELTS exam conducted?

The paper-delivered version of the IELTS Academic test is held 48 times a year, i.e. an average of 4 times a month, whereas the paper-delivered version of the IELTS General Training test is held 24 times a year, i.e. an average of 2 times a month.

In contrast, the computer-delivered versions of both the exams are held almost every day.

How can I book the IELTS exam?

You can book the IELTS exam by visiting the websites of British Council or IDP.

Where can I take the IELTS exam?

You can take the IELTS exam at an examination centre in any major city near you. Several small cities have IELTS test centres as well, though may not have the option of the computer-delivered test, which is available mostly in metropolitan areas.

What is the exam fee?

The examination fee is the same for IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. It keeps increasing from time-to-time and is INR 15,500 at present.

In how many days will I get the result?

The results of the paper-delivered IELTS exam are declared after 13 calendar days from the date of the LRW exam, whereas the results of the computer-delivered IELTS exam are declared after 5-7 calendar days from the date of the LRW exam. This time is the same for IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training.

For how long do I need to prepare for the IELTS exam?

It will take you 1 month to prepare for the IELTS exam if you follow a proper study plan dedicating around 2 hours every day. However, if your English is weak, it may take you 2-3 months as you will have to improve your language skills before you start preparing for the IELTS exam.

How do you train for the IELTS exam?

I take classes 2-3 times a week depending on how well you are following the study plan that we will prepare. Each class is 1 hour in duration and conducted either individually or in micro batches. This ensure that you learn from your peers and get personal attention at the same time. Training commences concept classes and subsequently, I will ask you to attempt mock-tests on a weekly basis. Once you are scoring well on the mock-tests and I am satisfied with your progress, I will ask you to book your exam slot.

Where do you conduct classes for the IELTS exam?

I conduct online classes for IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training using platforms such as Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc.

What preparation material should I buy to study for the IELTS exam?

Though there is a lot of preparation material available in the market, I would advise you to stick to official Cambridge material which you can easily buy online. Moreover, if you enrol in my classes for IELTS, I will also provide you with preparation material that I have compiled.

I hope that I have answered most of your questions regarding the IELTS exam and that you have a good amount of clarity about the structure of the exam, how to prepare for it and where your score is applicable.