

IELTS | Test format & Grading

You have a choice of two versions of IELTS: Academic or General Training. In university, we do the Academic version.

You will take the **Listening, Reading** and **Writing** tests all on the same day one after the other, with no breaks in between them.

Your **Speaking** test will either be after a break on the same day as the other three tests, or up to seven days before or after that. This will depend on your test centre.

Listening

Key points

- 30 minutes
- 4 sections
- 10 questions per section
- questions get harder later in test
- 10 minutes at end to fill out answer sheet
- A variety of voices and native-speaker accents are used
- Each section is heard *only once*.

IELTS Listening marking schemes

For the listening test, which contains 40 questions, the *approximate* band scores can be calculated using this table.

Band Score	9	8.5	8	7.5	7	6.5	6	5.5	5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5
Score / 40	39-40	37-38	35-36	32-34	30-31	26-29	23-25	18-22	16-17	13-15	10-12	8-10	6-7	4-5

These include questions which test your ability to;

- **understand main ideas and detailed factual information**
- **understand the opinions and attitudes of speakers**
- **understand the purpose of an utterance**
- **Follow the development of ideas**

Section 1-Conversation between two people set in an everyday social context.

Section 2-Monologue set in an everyday social context e.g. a speech about local facilities.

Section 3-Conversation between up to four people set in an educational or training context, e.g. a university tutor and a student discussing an assignment.

Section 4-Monologue on an academic subject e.g. a university lecture.

Reading

Key points

- **60 minutes**
- **3 texts**
- **20 minutes each**
- **40 questions**
- **No extra time to transfer answers**

IELTS Academic Reading marking schemes

The *approximate* band scores can be calculated using this table.

Band Score	9	8.5	8	7.5	7	6.5	6	5.5	5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5
Score / 40	39-40	37-38	35-36	33-34	30-32	27-29	23-26	19-22	15-18	13-14	10-12	8-9	6-7	4-5

A variety of question types is used in order to test a wide range of reading skills.

These including:

- **Reading for gist**
- **Reading for main ideas**
- **Reading for detail**
- **Skimming**
- **Understanding logical argument**
- **Recognizing writers' opinions**
- **Attitudes and purpose**

The texts range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. The texts are authentic and are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. These have been selected for a non-specialist audience but are appropriate for candidates entering university courses or seeking professional registration.

Writing

Key points

- 60 minutes
- 2 tasks

IELTS Academic Writing Marking Criteria

The following lessons explain in detail how the writing is marked

- **Task response**- Answer all parts of the task, present a clear position throughout the task Extend and support main ideas
- **Lexical resource**- range of vocabulary, spelling, word families, collocation Write enough words
- **Coherence and cohesion**- Paragraphs, punctuation, linking words, organization
- **Grammatical range and accuracy**- number of mistakes and complexity of grammar

The Writing Task 1 (*spend about 20 minutes*)

Requires you to write a summary of **at least 150 words** in response to a particular graph (bar, line or pie graph), table, chart, or process (how something works, how something is done).

This task tests your ability to:

- select and report the main features
- describe and compare data
- identify significance and trends in factual information
- describe a process

The Writing Task 2 (*spend about 40 minutes*)

Requires you to write an essay and needs to be at least 250 words. The essay could be agree/disagree, advantage/disadvantage, causes/problems and solutions and opinion.

This task tests your ability to respond by giving:

- giving and justifying an opinion
- discussing the topic
- summarizing details
- outlining problems
- identifying possible solutions
- supporting what you write with reasons, arguments and relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience

Task 2 carries more weight in marking than Task 1

Speaking - 11 to 14 minutes:

The Speaking component assesses your use of spoken English, and takes between 11 and 14 minutes to complete. Every test is recorded. The Speaking component is delivered in such a way that it does not allow candidates to rehearse set responses beforehand.

Part 1^[SEP] (4-5 mins)

The Examiner will ask you general questions about yourself and a range of familiar topics, such as home, family, work, studies and interests.

Part 2^[SEP] (3-4 mins)

You will be given a card which asks you to talk about a particular topic. You will have **one minute to prepare** before speaking for up to two minutes. The examiner will then ask one or two questions on the same topic to finish this part of the test.

Part 3 (4-5 mins)

You will be asked further questions connected to the topic in Part 2. These questions will give you the opportunity to discuss more abstract ideas and issue.