

IELTS

Writing and Speaking Skills



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Get a 7+ Band
Score

Written By:

Kristin Espinar

The book cover features a teal circular graphic on the left side, containing the title and author information. The background on the right is a close-up, grayscale image of a laptop keyboard. The title 'IELTS Writing and Speaking Skills' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with 'IELTS' in dark gray and the rest in white. Below the title, the subtitle 'Get a 7+ Band Score' is in a smaller white font. The author's name 'Kristin Espinar' is at the bottom in white.

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IELTS Writing and Speaking Skills by Kristin Espinar
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Cover by Kristin Espinar

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DEDICATION

To my two darling boys, Oliver and Sebastian,
May you one day realize that you can achieve everything you always
wanted to.

Love,
Mama

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

I would like to acknowledge the following people who have chosen to support me in my launch and success of this book. Firstly, to my husband for helping me find the time to write this book and giving me his expert design advice. Secondly, for the group of family and friends that helped me spread the word about this book and supported me with all the activities surrounding it.

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Thank you to Natalie Jennings of @jenningsphoto on IG for the beautiful headshots.

A Special Shout Out

I want to give a special thanks to three of my superstar students who either follow my podcast, join my events, take classes with me, or all three! Thanks for your enthusiastic support of my project and I'm so excited to have you on my team!!

Jijo Joseph
Muslimbek Yuldoshev
Indranil Saha

A SPECIAL GIFT FOR YOU

Firstly, I wanted to say thank you for purchasing this book. I hope that it serves as a helpful source of information, a convenient reference for you, and helps to give you insight on how to prepare for the IELTS exam. One thing that you will need for this book is something called the IELTS Vocabulary Notebook. This is something that I created in order to help all my students build a strong vocabulary and have a resource they can use for doing IELTS writing and speaking tasks. You can download the resource with the link below.

IELTS VOCABULARY NOTEBOOK

If you are unable to access it, please send me an email at: activateyourielts@gmail.com. I would like to hear from you anyway! If you do decide to write please tell me a little bit about yourself. You can tell me how long you have been studying English if you have taken the IELTS exam before, when you are planning to take it, and what particular struggles you are having. I may be able to point out a few more resources for you. Anyway thank you again and I look forward to hearing from you!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book was designed directly from my IELTS Writing and Speaking Video Course. The chapters and the organization of the book follow the course structure, but it also has added tips and advice. I decided to add these extra bits of information because I saw so many of my students making the same mistakes with their writing, speaking, and grammar, that I wanted to put everything in one place to use as a reference.

So this book was written as a guide to developing your IELTS writing and speaking skills as well as a reference resource for common mistakes in those areas as well.

Throughout the book you will see there are writing and speaking tasks that you can use to practice and develop your skills. You will also see buttons like the button below. You can click these buttons and they will take you to extra resources for the course.

In addition to this book, I also wrote a workbook that goes in conjunction with this book. The workbook includes 10 essential IELTS vocabulary lists, vocabulary lists related to other types of vocabulary like transition words, academic vocabulary, verbs to use with gerunds and infinitives, etc. It also contains worksheets, grammar checklists, writing prompts, speaking prompts, and IELTS speaking samples, IELTS writing samples.

This workbook serves as a fantastic companion to this ebook if you want a more practical resource for practicing your IELTS writing and speaking skills. You can read more about it and how to get it with the [link below](#).

Lastly, I want to say good luck! This is something you can do. Students often feel frustrated or lost, but I am here to help. I created

this book with you in mind, and I wanted to create a guide to help you get through this preparation process so that you would not feel alone and so that you would get the clear process that you need in order to get the IELTS 7+ band score that you want and deserve.

Now let's get started!

IELTS WORKBOOK



About the Author

Hello! My name is Kristin Espinar. I train IELTS students who struggle to develop the IELTS writing and IELTS speaking skills they need to get a 7+ band score. I help them get higher band scores while making it feel easy and fun.

I've got a master's degree in Applied Linguistics, 13 years of ESL and exam preparation experience, I am a certified IELTS instructor, and now a published author! I also run a weekly podcast called Activate Your IELTS: Be Determined and I regularly serve over 9000 people with tips and advice for preparing for the IELTS exam.

When I'm not writing, teaching, and creating online IELTS courses, I like to spend time with my family going to parks and natural areas in Florida. I also love traveling around the world, some of my favorite countries have been Indonesia and Colombia.

If you are dying to know more, here are a few things you don't know about me.

Fun Fact 1. I've eaten frog legs.

Fun Fact 2. I've travelled to 23 different countries.

Fun Fact 3: I lived abroad for 7 years.

Find out more [here!](#)



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Introduction: Speaking and Writing as Productive Skills

Many students struggle with these areas of the exam for a variety of reasons: lack of feedback, lack of practice time, lack of knowledge about what to do or how to do it.

One of the reasons that I originally designed my IELTS writing and speaking video course is that I saw students were having the most problems in developing their productive skills. Productive skills are writing and speaking skills and I call them productive skills because you actually need to produce something.

When taking an official English exam, it is certainly difficult to do the listening and reading part but the benefit is that you don't have to produce anything. In my opinion, it makes these parts of the exam a little bit easier to prepare for.



The best way to predict the future is to create it.

-Abraham Lincoln

When trying to prepare for language that you actually have to produce in an academic and structured way, I find that students really can feel a bit lost. Not only do they not know what they need to

do or how to do it, but they aren't able to practice in an authentic way or get corrective feedback which is useful for them.

If they are able to access it, it can sometimes be a struggle to find the right qualified professional to help them at a price they can afford. This is the reason I really wanted to create a book that helps students develop these skills either on their own or in conjunction with a course or a private tutor.

I find myself uniquely qualified to help students with these skills.

I've spent over 13 years working with ESL students, helping them build their general English level as well as prepare for official English exams or prepare to be successful in academic settings. During this time, I've had the opportunity to observe students, their habits, and practices in learning a second language and I've been able to see what works and what doesn't work on a first-hand basis.

Furthermore, I completed a master's degree focused on Applied Linguistics with a special concentration in second language acquisition for English language learners. So in the middle of my practical teaching experience, I also gained the theoretical knowledge and research which supported what I was seeing and experiencing on a daily basis with my students.

In addition to all of this, I also had a real passion for helping students actually use the language they were learning. In the past and in my current practice, my first goal is to always get students actually using the language through authentic communication. I want students to immediately begin speaking and writing and in my live classes, I love to take a workshop approach where we do speaking and writing practice together in class. We work in small groups and in pairs and we actually go through the process of writing together. That way we can move through the struggles together, get active and live instruction and feedback, and utilize the information in each other's

brains. I try to make my classes dynamic and actionable so that students leave having accomplished something.



It was with this spirit that I decided to also write this book. I wanted to show students, and to show you, how you are able to structure your responses, apply key vocabulary and techniques in a way that will help you get the band score that they need as well as show you everything that you can do to maximize your practice of these productive skills at home. The goal of this book is to help you see that you can actively prepare for the speaking and writing part of the exam at home and that you can learn and apply techniques that will help you improve. But as a student, you need to remember that you must be dedicated and you must be hardworking. Without hard work and a concerted effort, you won't improve. I always like to say that students will improve exactly the amount of effort that they put in. So that is my challenge to you. I want you to think about your approach, the tools you are going to use, the time that you are going to dedicate to your preparation. Most of all I want you to think about the following question.



Be stubborn about your goals and flexible about your methods.

-Unknown



How can you take the tips and advice from this book and put it into action in your life and your IELTS exam preparation? I wish you the best of luck and now it's time to get started!

CHAPTER TWO

The IELTS Preparation Process

The IELTS preparation process can be a pretty easy or a difficult task, depending on your English level and your ability to use English in an academic way. I have seen students who are fairly strong in English, not take much time to prepare and get the scores that they need for their particular goals. But in general, most students need to spend quite a bit of time on their preparation. The IELTS exam is not an easy exam, it's used as a vetting process to ensure that people who are applying for an immigration process, to demonstrate their level of English for work, or who are attempting to study abroad, really are able to use English in a proficient way. In my experience, most students are not really prepared for the IELTS exam, either in terms of English level, academic ability in English, or knowledge of exam strategy. The standards of this exam are high and that makes it difficult to get the scores you need consistently across the skills. Next, you will find some considerations you should review as you begin your IELTS preparation process.



TIME TO PREPARE

In general, a good amount of time to prepare for the exam is 3-6 months. Most people don't give themselves this long to prepare and they really struggle to build their English level and learn exam strategy in a short period of time. In fact, many students give themselves only a few weeks to prepare and they end up scrambling desperately to get the skills they need in a short period of time, often unsuccessfully.

Not giving yourself enough time to prepare often results in having to take the exam several times. Don't put yourself in the situation of having to pay for the exam several times and never giving yourself enough time to develop your English level or exam strategy skills. If you find yourself failing time and time again, you really need to stop and review what you are doing and perhaps get a qualified instructor to help you diagnose your weaknesses and help identify the areas you need to improve.

APPROACH

The first thing that you need to do is buy yourself an IELTS exam practice book. These are available everywhere and I have a few that I recommend on my website under [recommended resources](#).

After you purchase your exam practice book you should take one full complete test. Make sure to use a timer to time yourself. You will need to stop when your time is up and go on to the next section so that you get an idea of what you can do in the time allotted. You need to give yourself an accurate idea of where you are and what you can do. After you have completed this, you will be able to see what areas you are stronger in and what areas you are weaker in. This will help you to create a preparation plan wherein you prioritize your weaknesses.

So, for example, if you are strong in reading and weaker in listening, you can focus your efforts more on listening.

If you are not sure where you stand with speaking and writing, you should contact a qualified instructor to do a review of your skills and give you a band score. That way you will know where you are starting in those skills and where you need to go. If you decide to do this, you should ask your instructor what particular areas you need to improve in those skills and what grammar points are you making mistakes with.

After you have established a baseline for your abilities, you can then start doing exam preparation and grammar on a regular basis.

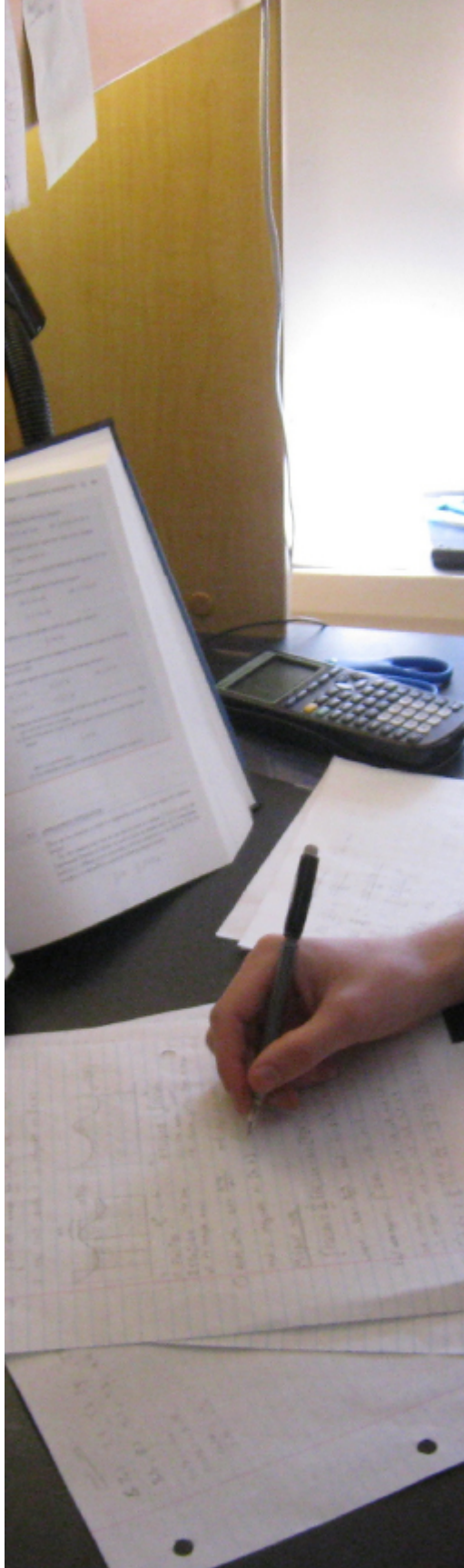
This of course depends on how much time you have. I recommend trying to do one exam section per day as practice and studying a few grammar points per week. Even if you decide to take an IELTS course with an instructor, you should be doing this exam practice on your own.

This includes doing regular exam practice with your speaking and writing skills.

Try to write one or two essays per week and try to do practice speaking prompts. Use the information, advice, and tips from this book to help you do that. You will also find practice speaking and writing prompts at the back of this book. Practice is an essential step and is something you need to put into your schedule on a regular basis.

STRATEGY

Exam strategy is something that you might not have thought of before but is something that will help you immensely. Exam strategies are tactics and approaches which help you do an IELTS task more efficiently, more quickly, and more accurately. If you pay attention to most exam practice books, you will find that they have a strategy section at the beginning of each section. TOEFL books are actually great for this and can help you out with strategy as well. If you are using an IELTS coursebook (as opposed to an exam practice book), you will see that they have strategy tips scattered throughout the book.





I think that most students skip over these when they are using IELTS books. I believe that they just skip right to the tests or write to the course content but miss the strategic tips or even dismiss them as nonsense, but the truth is that these are the tips and keys that you have been searching for all along. Developing these strategies will definitely help you get the answer in a quicker more efficient and accurate way.

READING STRATEGY

Reading strategy includes practicing the skills like previewing, skimming, scanning, identifying main ideas and details, summarizing, paraphrasing and understanding vocabulary in context. You can refer to the IELTS workbook to access strategy checklists to help you study these strategies more easily.

LISTENING STRATEGY

Listening strategy includes practicing the skills like previewing, predicting, identifying synonyms, identifying main ideas and details, recognizing signposting language.

WRITING STRATEGY

Writing strategy includes practicing skills like brainstorming effectively, organizing your ideas, using an academic essay structure, building your IELTS vocabulary, understanding how to write main ideas and details, being able to write a thesis statement, and understanding how to use topic sentences.

SPEAKING STRATEGY

Speaking strategy includes practicing of skills like using key vocabulary, using academic vocabulary, being able to discuss a variety of topics, being able to give your opinion on current issues, applying a variety of grammatical structures, and learning how to organize and extend your responses.



ENGLISH LEVEL

One key area to work on is knowing whether or not you have the English level for the exam. You shouldn't begin to prepare for the exam unless you have about an intermediate level of English and ideally an upper-intermediate level of English. If you are closer to an intermediate level of English, you should budget extra time to work on your general English skills, specifically grammar. Even if you do

have a higher level of English, you should still be building your skills as you do your preparation. This includes grammar study but also the use of authentic texts.

GRAMMAR

If grammar is an area that you struggle with, you are going to have to do a lot of extra work in your preparation. Not having a good level of grammar is going to contribute to a lot of mistakes in your speaking and writing skills and you will not likely pass with a 7+ band score. Review the grammar points from levels A1-B2. You should revise a grammar point or two and then try to use it in your writing and speaking tasks. After you do a practice task you should revise it and check your grammar skills to make sure you are following the grammatical rule correctly.

GRAMMAR POINTS FOR STUDY

I have created an exhaustive list of the grammatical structures you should know and be studying in your preparation. You can find the list in the [IELTS writing and speaking workbook](#).

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

There are a lot of resources that are devoted to English instruction and IELTS preparation. Many of these are free and others are paid. You should take advantage of all of them. For free resources, you can find a lot of information online just by searching and you can use YouTube. There are a lot of great instructional videos, just make sure you are following a qualified instructor. You can also follow podcasts.

I recommend listening to my podcast for lots of free advice: Activate Your

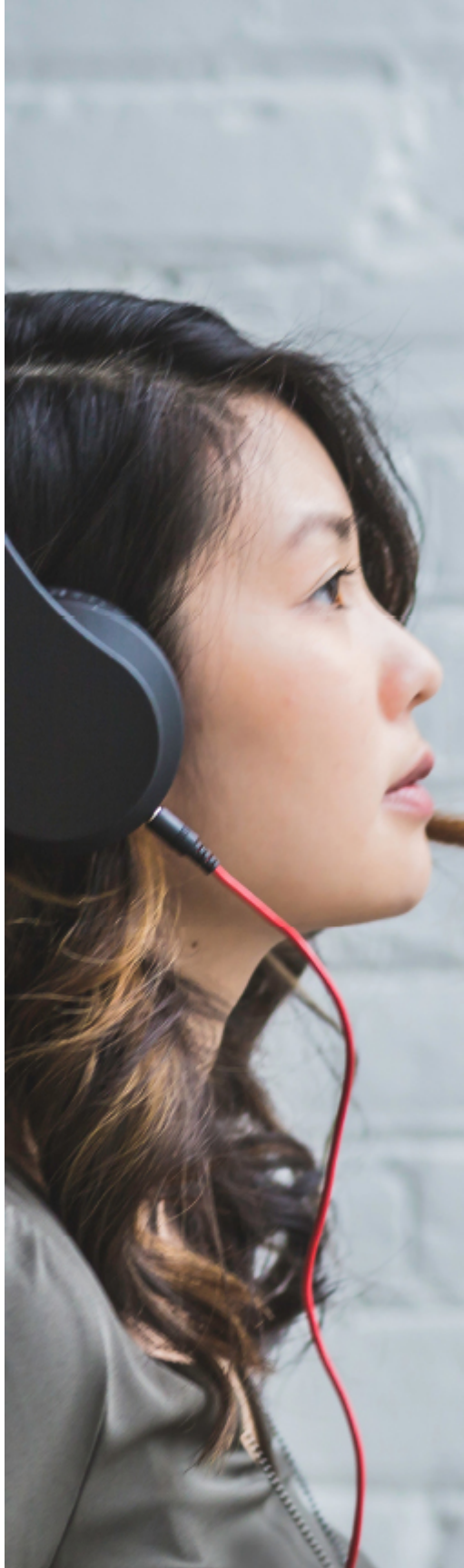
IELTS: Be Determined.

Utilize IELTS exam practice books, IELTS course books, general English books, and IELTS vocabulary books as well. Books that give advice or tips about IELTS preparation are also helpful.

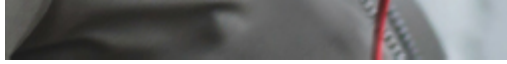
Take advantage of exam practice websites and English language websites for developing your grammar.

AUTHENTIC TEXTS

Finally, you should be using authentic texts on a daily basis. You might be wondering what authentic texts are, and they are basically anything that uses English in a natural way. Think articles, websites, books, videos, music, podcasts. But the difference is, is that these are texts that are just using English in a natural and authentic way, they are not dedicated to exam preparation or English development. These are things like watching your favorite movie in English, or reading a news article a day in English or listening to a podcast on a topic that interests you.



Instagram and Telegram: @PDFEnglish



Using English in an authentic way each day is going to build your vocabulary, improve your reading comprehension, and help you strengthen your listening skills. Additionally, it is going to help you be prepared to discuss or write about topical and current issues which often arise on the IELTS exam. Using authentic texts on a daily basis is essential to your IELTS preparation and English language development.

Definition: Authentic Texts

Real life English examples: Articles, newspapers, books, podcasts, commercials, movies, TV series, etc.





Essentially, the IELTS preparation process includes an approach where you take into account the time that you have to prepare, you combine exam practice tests with the study of exam strategy, while at the same time building your English level through grammar study and the use of authentic texts. Easy right? Let me help you get started.

“

Do something that your future self will thank you for.

-Sean Patrick Flanery

Chapter Recap

Here are the key points highlighted in this chapter

1. Give yourself time to prepare (3-6 months)
 2. Do regular exam practice
 3. Get familiar with exam strategy
 4. Review grammar points
5. Use authentic texts on a daily basis



Understanding IELTS Marking Criteria

In order to be successful on the exam, you need to fully understand how you will be assessed. The means getting a clear and intimate understanding of the IELTS marking criteria and knowing where you would fall in those categories.

Many students plunge right into their IELTS exam preparation without fully understanding how they will be assessed in the speaking and writing areas. This is key to your success, because it will help you prepare better and help you improve your English. When students aren't aware of exactly what examiners are scoring them on they are not able to identify which areas are their weaknesses and which areas they are strong in.

Students often feel a bit lost and helpless and sometimes might even feel like the examiners or the IELTS exam itself is out to get them. Trust me it's not, but it is a difficult exam that is meant to ensure you have the capabilities in English to succeed in what you are setting out to do.

So if you are taking the IELTS exam to enter into a university, the exam results are meant to show that you are capable of taking high-level courses in English and that you will be able to succeed in them. Think about it, this means that you really do need to be good at

English, not just have enough English to pass the exam. So that's why it's important to understand each area of the marking criteria. If you don't get a 7 or above in each of those areas it's unlikely you will get the score that you need to reach your goals..

In your preparation, you will need to focus on improving your IELTS task responses and improving your general English level in each area of the marking criteria to help ensure that you are able to get the band score that you want and need.

The only way to really do this effectively, is to have a clear understanding of the marking criteria. You need to understand each descriptor for your desired level and get an extensive amount of practice using it to assess your own writing and speaking.



IELTS scoring in detail. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/ielts-scoring-in-detail>

IELTS SPEAKING MARKING CRITERIA

Let's look first at the IELTS speaking criteria. There are four areas to consider when you are beginning to learn how you are assessed on the speaking exam. The first area is fluency and coherence, the second area is lexical resource, the third area is grammatical range and accuracy and the fourth area is pronunciation.

Each of these areas is divided into 9 different band scores. Most students need to get a 7 band score or higher and most students that I meet fall in the area of 5 - 6.5 level band scores. Sometimes I see students that may have a 7 in one area of the marking criteria but score lower in the other areas.

This is actually pretty common and this is your actual challenge. How can you improve your English in all areas of the marking criteria so that each area scores above a band 7? Your first step will be that you will need to review the IELTS marking criteria band scores of 7 and above to ensure that you are meeting the criteria. Let's take a quick look at the requirements of a band score 7 in the different areas of marking criteria.

FLUENCY AND COHERENCE

This area ensures that you are able to deliver a fluid response which is easy to understand for the listener. In order to get a 7 or above you need to be able to speak for long periods of time without repetition, loss of coherence, slow speech or too much self-correction. (IELTS in Detail)

You are able to show a little bit of hesitation but not so much that it impedes listener comprehension or in other words makes it difficult for the listener to follow what you are saying. You should also make sure that your responses are well-organized and well-developed. You don't want your responses to stray off topic or for you to forget what you are saying. All of this describes the 7-band in the area of fluency and coherence.



LEXICAL RESOURCE

Lexical resources is a fancy way of saying vocabulary. But the truth is, is that it refers to having a strong vocabulary in a variety of different types of vocabulary. You need to have a strong basis in IELTS vocabulary (topical/thematic vocabulary), academic vocabulary, collocative vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions, and then also the ability to use some actual idioms in English.

The 7 band descriptor for this area requires that you are able to use vocabulary on a variety of topics and that you are able to use lesson common and idiomatic vocabulary precisely. (IELTS in Detail) So you need to have a high level of vocabulary and use it correctly in terms of meaning, use, and word formation. You also need to be able to summarize or paraphrase if the opportunity arises.

GRAMMATICAL RANGE AND ACCURACY

Grammatical range and accuracy is an area that can make or break a student. If you are preparing to take the IELTS exam but you don't have a strong basis in grammar, this is the area that will break you. You need to have a pretty good understanding of grammar from levels Beginner to Upper-Intermediate (A1-B2) if you want to do well on the exam. If you don't have a strong basis and by strong basis, I mean that you are able to use the grammatical tenses pretty well without too many major errors, then you definitely need to be doing grammar study in addition to your IELTS preparation. You should use the grammar curriculum suggestions in this book and study a new grammar point each day or each week and make sure to apply it to your exam practice. The band descriptor for 7 in this area requires that you are able to use a variety of simple and complex grammatical structures that are relatively error free. (IELTS in Detail)



IELTS scoring in detail. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/ielts-scoring-in-detail>

The errors you make should be with the more complex tenses. If you are making errors with simpler tenses and you are making repetitive errors or more than a few that will keep you from getting a band score 7+.



EXAMPLES

Let's take an example. A student who makes one or two errors using conditional sentences or gerunds and infinitives might still be able to get a 7+ band score while a student who is making repetitive mistakes with articles or non-count nouns is unlikely to. Why? Because the second student is making mistakes with simple structures, they may be structures that are difficult for you due to your native language but you still need to fix these mistakes if you want to get a good score in this area.

PRONUNCIATION

The area of pronunciation is a little less developed in the band descriptors here. But basically what you need to know is that you are pronouncing English well enough that the listener doesn't have any major issues in understanding you. You should definitely pay attention to things like sentence stress or word stress but you can also start looking up lists of pronunciation points which are common areas of difficulty for your first language. For example, most people struggle with the short i /ɪ/ sound in English. There are plenty of lists online that show errors typically made in a variety of first languages. I recommend starting there and working on each area of difficulty. You can always get a teacher for a short period of time to help you

and assess you in this area if you are not sure how your pronunciation is.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Overall, this is something you should be reviewing after each speaking practice preparation that you do. You can and should be recording yourself doing speaking tasks and then listening and assessing yourself. You can ask yourself, *“How is my vocabulary? What vocabulary can I add?”* or *“How many hesitations and pauses did I have? Am I stuttering or mispronouncing anything?”*



Take the time to evaluate yourself because the more that you do that, the more you become aware of your own abilities and what you need to do to improve it. As a result, on test day you will be making sure that you meet all of these areas of criteria so that you are able to nail the speaking part of the exam.

“

To save myself I must face myself, which may be the hardest of all things to face.

-Craig D. Lounsbrough



IELTS WRITING MARKING CRITERIA

IELTS marking criteria is a little bit different than the speaking marking criteria so it's worth having a look at it here. Grammatical range and accuracy and lexical resource remain the same but there are two additional areas called cohesion and coherence and task achievement. Let's look at them a little bit more in depth.

TASK ACHIEVEMENT

Task achievement refers to how well you respond to the prompt and how well-developed your ideas are. This is actually something pretty difficult to do and it's a key area of focus for me in my IELTS courses and in this book. Over the years I've seen students really struggle with learning how to structure their responses in a way that meetings

academic guidelines and is also well-developed and supports your response. So that's what this criteria is about.

It ensures that you are able to respond fully to the task and that you are able to present a clear position that is fully developed and supported. In order to get a band 7 in this area, you need to answer all parts of the prompt fully, present a clear claim throughout the response, and use details and examples to develop and support your ideas. (IELTS in Detail)

One thing to pay attention to is the different types of essays you may be asked to write. If the essay asks for advantages and disadvantages, you must discuss both areas or you won't meet task achievement. If the essay prompt is a two-part question, you must answer both questions.

COHESION AND COHERENCE

This part begins to look at your actual argument. It wants to see that you are developing your main ideas well. You should utilize a typical main idea and supporting detail format and you should be using cohesive devices like transition words. You also need to be using them skillfully which goes much further than just using them in your concluding paragraph. This also takes quite a bit of practice and this book focuses on helping you develop that skill as well.

IELTS scoring in detail. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/ielts-scoring-in-detail>



LEXICAL RESOURCE

As a recap, the 7 band descriptor for this area requires that you are able to use vocabulary on a variety of topics and that you are able to use less common and idiomatic vocabulary precisely. So you need to have a high level of vocabulary and use it correctly in terms of meaning, use, and word formation. You also need to be able to summarize or paraphrase if the opportunity arises.

GRAMMATICAL RANGE AND ACCURACY

To quickly summarize, the band descriptor for 7 in this area requires that you are able to use a variety of simple and complex grammatical structures that are relatively error free. (IELTS in Detail) The errors you make should be with the more complex tenses. If you are making errors with simpler tenses and you are making repetitive errors or more than a few that will keep you from getting a band score 7+ in IELTS writing and in this area.

Chapter Recap

Review the key points from this chapter:

1. You need to be familiar with IELTS writing and speaking marking criteria
2. You need to understand the band descriptors for the band score you want
3. You need to practice self-assessment across these areas

