

IELTS (International English Language Testing System)

What is IELTS?

IELTS, the **International English Language Testing System**, is designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is the language of communication. It is jointly managed by the “University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations” (Cambridge ESOL), “The British Council” and “IDP:IELTS Australia”. IELTS conforms to the highest international standards of language assessment and covers the four language skills – **listening, reading, writing** and **speaking**. IELTS is recognised by universities and employers in many countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. It is also recognised by professional bodies, immigration authorities and other government agencies.



What is the test format?

1. Listening

Time: 30 minutes. Candidates listen to a number of recorded texts. These include a mixture of monologues and conversations and feature a variety of English accents and dialects. The recording is heard only once, and candidates are given time to read the questions and write down their answers. Assessors look for evidence of your ability to understand the main ideas and detailed factual information, as well as the opinions and attitudes of the speakers.

2. Reading

Time: 60 minutes. The Reading component consists of 40 questions, designed to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical argument and recognizing writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose. The reading test includes extracts from books, magazines, newspapers, notices, advertisements, company handbooks and guidelines. These are materials you are likely to encounter on a daily basis in an English-speaking environment.

3. Writing

Time: 60 minutes. Topics are of general interest. There are two tasks:

Task 1 - you will be presented with a situation and asked to write a letter requesting information, or explaining the situation. The letter may be personal, semi-formal or formal in style.

Task 2 - you will be asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. The essay can be fairly personal in style.

4. Speaking

Time: 11–14 minutes. This is a face-to-face interview. Candidates are assessed on their use of spoken English to answer short questions, to speak at length on a familiar topic, and also to interact with the examiner.

Hours of study normally needed to obtain IELTS levels:

IELTS Grade	Hours of study *	5 hours a week	10 hours a week	15 hours a week	20 hours a week
9.0	1200	60 months	30 months	20 months	15 months
8.0	1000	50 months	25 months	17 months	13 months
7.0	800	40 months	20 months	14 months	10 months
6.0	600	30 months	15 months	10 months	8 months
5.0	400	20 months	10 months	7 months	5 months
4.0	200	10 months	5 months	4 months	3 months

* Includes reading, learning in class or at home, practising conversation, etc.

IELTS Band Scores

Multi-level

IELTS is a multi-level exam. You get a score between 1 and 9 for each section. Half scores such as 6.5 are possible. Universities and companies often demand a score of 6 or 7. They may also demand a minimum score in each of the 4 sections.

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

IELTS General Reading marking schemes

For the general reading 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	40	39	37-38	36	34-35	32-33	30-31	27-29	23-26	19-22	15-18	12-14	9-11	6-8

IELTS Writing marking schemes

The two writing questions are marked out of 9 according to the following criteria:

- Task Achievement
- Coherence and Cohesion
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy

IELTS Speaking marking schemes

The speaking test is marked out of 9 according to the following criteria:

- Fluency and coherence
- Lexical resource
- Grammatical range and accuracy
- Pronunciation