

IELTS EXAM GUIDE

With sample papers



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About the IELTS exam



The IELTS exam is a language proficiency test designed for non-native English speakers to assess their language skills. Recognized by most of the universities in the world, especially in Australia, Britain, Canada, and New Zealand, IELTS is a major academic prerequisite that opens doors to international education.

It offers online as well as offline tests that have a fixed format. These tests are organized up to 4 times or more each month and the results vary based on the form of your examination. The IELTS results for pen and paper tests are announced after 7-10 days from the date of the test. However, the computer-delivered mode has more frequent test dates and a greater number of centers. These IELTS results are generally announced in about 5 days from the date of the test.

According to experts, the best way to ace the IELTS test is by thorough preparation and attempting an IELTS sample paper.

IELTS exam pattern

Sections	Duration	Questions	Section details
Listening	30 minutes	4 sections/ 40 questions	Listen to recordings & pick out answers
Reading	60 minutes	40 questions	Answer questions based on 3 passages
Writing	60 minutes	2 tasks	Task 1- min. 150 words Task 2- min. 250 words
Speaking	11-14 minutes	3 sections	Answer questions in a face-to-face interview

* This information is for the computer-delivered IELTS

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The total time given to complete the test is 2 hours 45 minutes. Since IELTS is regarded as the most popular English test for people who wish to study or work abroad, it has two different modules;

General: For those who only want to work abroad

Academic: For students who want to study abroad

While the general module is for candidates planning to work abroad or for immigration purposes, students who wish to study abroad take up the academic module. Naturally, in this guide, we tell you all about the IELTS academic test.

IELTS registration

IELTS has an online registration system. One can also submit a print of the registration form at the nearest IELTS IDP or IELTS British Council center. While the pen and paper mode has a selective number of dates, the computer-delivered IELTS has a substantial number of them.

For both formats, it is necessary to book the test date in advance on the IELTS IDP or IELTS British Council websites. Remember, a passport is mandatory for registration as you have to present it as ID proof. You can do your IELTS exam registration [here](#).

IELTS scoring system

The IELTS score is based on 0-9 bands. Each paper of IELTS weighs 9 bands. The individual scores of each paper are rounded up to a final score. The score rounds up to nearest 0.5 or whole band if the score turns up to 0.75 or 0.25.

Usually, universities expect at least 6.5-7 bands. Some universities might ask for individual paper scores as well.

Listening and reading scores depend on the number of correct answers. While the writing scores are based on completion of the task and its grammatical accuracy. The scores of speaking are based on fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy. Many claim that the best way to get a high IELTS score is to attempt at least one IELTS sample paper before the main exam. You can find the official IELTS scoring system [here](#).

IELTS Syllabus

The IELTS exam is divided into 4 different sections:

- Reading
- Listening
- Writing
- Speaking

1) Reading section

The reading paper has 3 passages with a total of 40 questions divided into a number of tasks. The candidate is expected to complete the paper in 60 minutes. The questions in different tasks range from multiple-choice, matching information, diagram labeling and identifying information (question type: true or false). The distribution of the number of questions in the tasks is not fixed.

2) Listening section

The listening paper has a total of 40 questions divided in 4 different tasks which are to be finished in 30 minutes. Candidates have 10 minutes extra as a transfer time which is the time given to shift the final answers to the answer sheet.

IELTS experts suggest that the candidates write rough answers on the question paper as they listen to the audio to avoid haste.

The candidate listens to 4 different recordings, played only once. The recordings will be in a variety of voices with native-speaker accents. They can be a one on one conversation or a monologue on any topic. The questions range from multiple-choice, matching, map or diagram labeling, form completion, note completion, summary completion, and short answers.

3) Writing section

Writing test consists of two sections with a total test time of 60 minutes.

Section 1

Consists of various types of visual information(e.g: graphs or pi diagrams). The candidates are expected to elaborate the visual information in precisely 150 words.

Section 2

Consists of a topic to write on where candidates elaborate on an argument or a topic in not less or more than 250 words.

4) Speaking section

Speaking test is an interview with the examiner which lasts up to 11-14 minutes. The test consists of 3 tasks.

1. Task 1

Typically an introduction or an interview wherein the examiner asks the candidate for a personal introduction. The interview can go on for about 4-5 minutes.

2. Task 2

In the second task, a task card is given to the candidate containing a topic to speak on. 1 minute is given to jot down the notes and 1-2 minutes are given to talk on the given topic. At the end of the 2 minutes, the examiner can ask a couple of questions based on your topic.

3. Task 3

Related to the previous task. The topic from task two is discussed in-depth and in an abstract way. This task can end up for 4-5 minutes. In some cases, the speaking test is conducted on a different day.

Preparation tips

We talk to a lot of students who ask questions like, 'How to prepare for IELTS in 15 days?'. Well, the short answer is, IELTS preparation can last from anywhere between 10 days to 10 months. It all depends on you. Although, the best way to get 7 bands or above out of 9 is to attempt a IELTS mock test. To help you along, we've already provided links to the official IELTS sample papers. Be sure to use them for your IELTS preparation. While you prepare, here are some tips for each section which can be helpful during your exam:

Listening

Candidates have 10 minutes transfer time. One can write the answers roughly on the question paper as they listen to the audio and transfer the answers later on the answer paper in the extra time given. For this paper, you can prepare by listening to the audios of native-speakers in their accents.

Reading

Reading newspapers, articles and magazines can go a long way for the preparation of the reading test. On the day of the test, read the passage carefully. Read and answer the questions after you read the passage in entirety.

Writing

Practice elaborating all kinds of visual information available, as one can get two-three types of diagrams at once. Try not to spend more than 20 minutes on task one and not more than 40 minutes on task two.

Speaking

The only way to practice speaking is by increasing the use of English on a daily basis. If you are a fast or a slow speaker, try controlling your speed. As you get only 1-2 minutes for task two, practice this task by referring to mock tests available online.

IELTS Sample papers

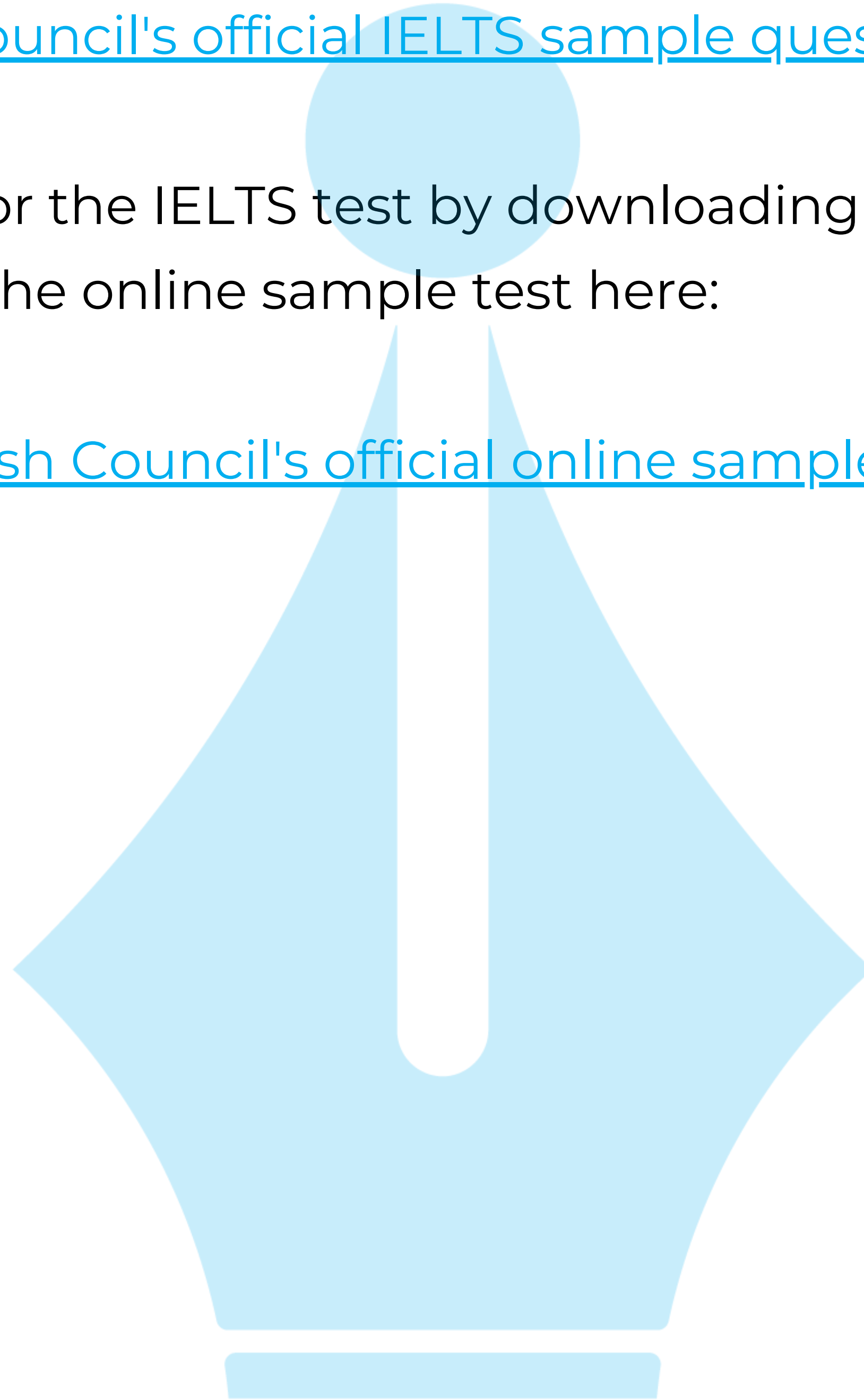
The exam itself is not inherently difficult. However, the questions asked in the exam can be tricky. Because many students don't attempt any IELTS mock tests before the main exam, they lose valuable marks.

For your reference, here are some official IELTS sample papers to help you get an idea of the kind of questions you might face in the real IELTS exam:

[British Council's official IELTS sample question bank](#)

You can also prepare for the IELTS test by downloading the official British Council app or taking the online sample test here:

[British Council's official online sample test](#)




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(+91) 9145332283 

iSchoolConnect.com 

5th Floor, WeWorks, Spectrum Tower, Mindspace, 
Malad(West), Mumbai, India-400064

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