

# STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

STUDY NOTES

EPISODE 1: IELTS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

## IELTS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

IELTS is a proficiency test which assesses your English language ability in four language skill areas – listening, reading, writing and speaking. Depending on your need – whether it’s for tertiary or secondary study, professional recognition or immigration purposes – you can choose to do either the Academic or General Training module.

Writing and Speaking are productive skills and test your ability to produce written and spoken language.

### IELTS Tip

Familiarise yourself with all the different question types in the Listening and Reading Modules and possible question topics and tasks in the Writing and Speaking Modules of the IELTS Test. For Speaking and Writing understand what the examiners are looking for. Familiarise yourself with the criteria for Writing – Task Response, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. For Speaking understand what is required for Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy and Pronunciation.

### Writing

Two tasks requiring different types of writing are given so that you can demonstrate your writing skills.

	Academic	General Training
Task 1	summarising/describing factual information	letter
Task 2	well-structured essay	

### Speaking

In the Speaking Test there are three different parts so that you can demonstrate how well you can express yourself on a variety of different topics ranging from the personal to the more abstract and using both formal and informal language.

### Assessment Criteria

Four criteria are used to assess your written and spoken language.

CRITERIA	
WRITING	SPEAKING
Task Response	
Coherence and Cohesion	Fluency and Coherence
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
Lexical Resource	Lexical Resource
	Pronunciation

Three of the criteria overlap: Coherence, Grammatical Accuracy and Range, Lexical Resource.

Each criterion assesses specific aspects of your language. These are spelt out below and can be used as a checklist when reviewing your writing or practising your speaking.

### Task Response

Task response refers to the content of your answer. It assesses how well you've understood and answered the question.

Criteria: Task Response		Checklist
Writing Task 1		
Academic	General Training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I provided an overview of the general trends?</li> <li>Have I summarised or described the key features in the graph or diagram?</li> <li>Have I provided supporting evidence or information?</li> <li>Have I written at least 150 words?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I stated the purpose of my letter?</li> <li>Have I addressed the 3 bullet points in the question?</li> <li>Is the tone of my letter correct, i.e. formal or informal?</li> <li>Have I written at least 150 words?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Writing Task 2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I answered all parts of the question?</li> <li>Are my ideas relevant and appropriate to the topic?</li> <li>Have I developed and supported my ideas?</li> <li>Have I stated my position on the topic?</li> <li>Is my conclusion relevant to the topic?</li> <li>Have I written at least 250 words?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>

### Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence and cohesion refer to the organisation of your answer. More specifically, coherence looks at the logical organisation of your ideas and sentences in both your paragraph and essay as a whole. Cohesion focuses on the organisation of your language, showing the relationship between your ideas.

Criteria: Coherence and Cohesion	Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I developed my answer logically?</li> <li>Have I organised my ideas logically into paragraphs?</li> <li>Have I used appropriate linking words to show the relationship between my ideas and sentences?</li> <li>Have I used appropriate reference words?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>

### Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Grammatical range assesses the variety of sentence types used, while accuracy measures the number of errors in your written and spoken language.

Criteria: Grammatical Range and Accuracy		Checklist
Writing and Speaking		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I used a variety of simple, compound and complex sentences?</li> <li>Have I used a range of structures to convey modality, conditionals, active/passive, cause/effect and tenses?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Writing	Speaking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have I used correct punctuation?</li> <li>Have I used the correct tense?</li> <li>Does the subject agree with the verb?</li> </ul>	How well can the assessor understand me even though I've made some errors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> </ul>

### Lexical Resource

This criterion, which is also known as vocabulary, assesses how well you choose and use a range of vocabulary items for a particular topic.

Criteria: Lexical Resource		Checklist
Writing and Speaking		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the words and expressions I use appropriate and accurate?</li> <li>Do I have a good range of vocabulary to cover the topic?</li> <li>Have I used correct word forms?</li> <li>Have I used some idiomatic language?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
Writing	Speaking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How accurate is my spelling?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well can I talk about personal and familiar topics?</li> <li>How well can I discuss more abstract topics?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>

### Fluency and Coherence

How well you communicate demonstrates your fluency and coherence. Your ability to speak without too much hesitation shows how fluent you are, while logically organising and linking your ideas show how coherent your speech is.

Criteria: Fluency and Coherence		Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can I speak at length on a topic?</li> <li>Have I organised my ideas logically?</li> <li>Have I used appropriate linking words?</li> <li>Do I speak clearly and smoothly?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>

## Pronunciation

How easily you can be understood is what pronunciation is about.

Criteria: Pronunciation	Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I pronounced my words correctly?</li> <li>• How appropriately have I used stress and intonation?</li> <li>• How well can the interviewer understand me?</li> <li>• Is my voice strong and clear?</li> </ul>	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

## IELTS Band Scores

The four criteria are used to assess your level of English on a scale from 1-9 not only for writing and speaking, but listening and reading as well. Each module is weighted equally but you can get a half band score for any of the sections.

The language level of a user is generally described as follows:

Band	User
9	expert
8	very good
7	good
6	competent
5	modest
4	limited
3	extremely limited
2	intermittent
1	non user
0	did not attempt the test

To move to a higher band score, for example from a band 5 to a band 6, will take at least 400 hours of learning English.

Grammar control, for example, is one of the descriptors assessed under the criteria: Grammatical Range and Accuracy. Comparing the descriptors that refer to grammar control in bands 7, 6 and 5, the following differences can be noted:

Band	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>

Reference:

[http://www.ielts.org/PDF/UOBDS\\_WritingT2.pdf](http://www.ielts.org/PDF/UOBDS_WritingT2.pdf)



In order to improve your score, it is necessary to reduce the number of grammatical errors.

### Grammar Practice

One of the areas requiring attention is the accurate use of quantity words such as **amount**, **number**, **less** and **fewer**. The general rule is that **amount** and **less** are used with uncountable nouns and **number** and **fewer** are used with countable. Do **Activity 1** for practice.

### Vocabulary Practice

Another area requiring attention is spelling and word formation. These features are assessed under the criteria: Lexical Resource. The level of difference between bands 7, 6 and 5, for example, is as follows:

Band	Lexical Resource
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>

Reference:

[http://www.ielts.org/PDF/UOBDS\\_WritingT2.pdf](http://www.ielts.org/PDF/UOBDS_WritingT2.pdf)

Do **Activity 2** for practice.