

IELTS Study Tips and Resources

If you've done some research on Express Entry, you may know how important it is to do well on the IELTS exam - it can make or break your score! Because of this, we prepared a short document with some tips and free online resources and practice tests you can use to study.

Keep in mind there are plenty of additional free and paid resources online to help you prepare, but what's most important is to dedicate time to actually studying for the test. Becoming more familiar with the English language and specific IELTS questions can drastically improve your score and is the first step to a successful move to Canada!

- Good luck from the Visto Team

The IELTS Format:

There are 4 parts to the IELTS exam - the basics are shown in the table below, and we also recommend reading about each one in more detail in the link provided underneath the chart:

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Length	30 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes	11-14 minutes
# of Questions	40	40	2	Varies
Format	You will listen to 4 different tape recordings and answer a variety of question types.	Questions will be asked on several separate bodies of text, such as books, magazines, advertisements, etc.	You must write a letter (150 words) and essay (250 words) in full sentences in the allotted time.	3 separate parts that focus on verbal communication, organising ideas and expressing opinions.

For more details on each section, see the following link:

<https://www.ielts.org/about-the-test/test-format-in-detail>

General Study tips

If you can set aside a few hours a day to study, you should be able to do quite well with 3-4

weeks of preparation.

Focus on the sections you need the most improvement in, but don't forget to continue practicing them all too.

Start slowly to make sure you are doing the exercises properly. Once you've made improvements, start using a timer.

Include more English in your everyday life - read, write, speak and listen to it any chance you get.

Get a good sleep the night before the IELTS and make sure you are there on time.

Some good free resources with practice tests, exercises and advice.

<https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/prepare-test/free-practice-tests>

<http://idpielts.me/prepare-ielts/free-ielts-practice-tests/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ieltsliz/featured>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/EnglishRyan/videos>

Below you will find specific tips and resources for each individual IELTS section:

Tips for the Listening section:

Listen to as much English as you can - T.V., lectures, movies, podcasts, etc. to get used to listening to the English language and understanding exactly what is being said. This is something you can train yourself to be better at!

Make sure to remember the EXACT instructions, such as how many words you can use for your answer, how many things to list, etc. You will lose points if you don't.

When you're told to look at specific questions, go over them quickly and underline any key words to focus on. You may have to write down one answer while listening for another so being able to recognize the key terms of each is helpful.

Keep in mind there will be different kinds of voices - accents, young people, men, women, Australian, British etc. There also may be background noise. The key is to focus on exactly what is being said.

Focus on details and descriptions like dates, numbers, years, etc. You may not know where to use them yet, but they could be worth noting down for some of the answers. You may forget these details once the next sentence starts.

If you don't know an answer or think you missed it, move on. Worrying about it will only cause you to miss more questions too.

If any word is repeated, spelled out or is louder than normal, make special note of it - it is probably an answer to a question.

When you're filling in gaps or completing sentences, make sure the grammar is correct.

There are 20 minutes of listening where you will be jotting down your answers in the Listening Test book. You then get 10 minutes to copy your answers to the Answer Book, which you should do as efficiently as possible.

Free online practice materials for Listening:

<https://elc.polyu.edu.hk/IELTS/>

<http://www.esl-lab.com/>

<https://www.ielts.org/about-the-test/sample-test-questions#>

Tips for the Reading section:

Listen carefully to the instructions so you know which questions and paragraphs to focus on.

Divide up the time you spend on each reading passage at the start - for example, if there are 4 passages, you should spend 15 minutes on each. Make sure to give yourself time to copy your answers to the Answer Book too.

Scan the passage first to get an idea of what it's about and maybe jot down a note or underline the key ideas for each paragraph. This will make it easier to read the questions and answer them more efficiently by looking for specific keywords from the question.

Focus on one question at a time and locate the answer in the appropriate paragraph. If you're spending too much time on one question, skip it and come back to it at the end.

Forget any personal knowledge you may have on the topic and only rely on facts from the passage.

Here are some sample practice questions. Keep in mind that the Academic Reading questions are harder than the normal questions you will get, but they are very good practice. If you can do well on those you will be in very good shape!

http://www.selfaccess.com/sa_ver2_kereru.php?page=samples

<http://education.kulichki.net/lang/ieread.html>

http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/sample_tutorials.html

https://www.examenglish.com/IELTS_reading.htm

Tips for the Writing section:

You have 20 minutes to write a 150 word letter and 40 minutes to write a 250 word essay. If you're struggling to write enough, try to get as close to the limit as possible.

Use clean writing and formatting. Make sure the writing is neat, leave a blank line in between each paragraph and keep everything within the margins.

Stick to the standard outline of intro, body, conclusion. In your intro, make sure to start with "Dear Sir/Madam" if it's addressed to someone, or include their name if it is given in the question.

Your intro should be a small paragraph, then go into more details to answer the questions in the body (2-4 paragraphs depending on the question), then finish with a conclusion paragraph and signature (if applicable).

Once you've read the assignment, do some quick brainstorming to start forming your answer. Feel free to get creative, whatever works quickest for you. Use these ideas to form the majority of your answer.

Once you're done your answer, read it over to check for spelling and grammar mistakes. Fix them quickly.

Practice makes perfect, especially in writing. Practice with a timer and don't forget to review/edit your answers.

Make sure to read the instructions carefully and cover every question/topic mentioned.

Tips for the Speaking section:

Your accent will not affect your score - focus on speaking clearly and confidently at all times, and try to pause as little as possible.

Introduce yourself politely to the interviewer and with a friendly smile. Relaxed body language and good eye contact with the interviewer will also help.



The interviewer will begin with basic questions about you - answer using 1-2 sentences and avoid "yes/no" answers. You want to prove your English skills are strong!

Sample questions:

Where are you from?

What is it like there?

Tell me about your family?

What do you do for work?

What's your favourite kind of food?

Do you like reading?

Next, you'll be given a card with 3-4 questions on it. You'll have a minute to prepare a 2-minute speech to answer them and can use a pen and paper to make notes.

For example:

Talk about your favorite restaurant.

Your answer should include:

- Where it is located in your city?
- What does it look like?
- What kind of food do they serve?
- What makes the restaurant so special to you?

Practice preparing answers in the 1 to 2 minute range to questions like the example above.

Lastly, you will have a conversation with the interviewer about the topic discussed in part 2. Be prepared to discuss this topic in more detail, including analysing issues and expressing your opinion further.

If you don't understand a question that is asked, politely ask them to repeat it or go into a little more detail.

Once finished, make sure to thank the interviewer for their time and wish them a good day!