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English Solutions

**IELTS™**



# 2

IELTS  
test format

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## A test of four skills

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Test takers can choose between IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training, depending on their academic or professional aspirations, or visa requirements.

The distinction with IELTS Academic lies in the subject matter and tasks of the Reading and Writing components. The Listening and Speaking components are the same.

### Listening 30 minutes

Test takers listen to four recorded texts, monologues and conversations by a range of native speakers, and write their answers to a series of questions.

### Reading 60 minutes

The **Academic** version includes three long texts which range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. The texts are authentic and are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers, all of which have been selected for a non-specialist audience.

The **General Training** version requires test takers to read extracts from newspapers, advertisements, instruction manuals and books. These are materials test takers could encounter on a daily basis in an English speaking country.

### Writing 60 minutes

The **Academic** version includes two tasks. Topics are of general interest to, suitable for and easily understood by test takers entering undergraduate or postgraduate studies or seeking professional registration.

#### Task 1

Test takers are presented with a graph, table, chart or diagram and are asked to describe, summarise or explain the information in their own words. They may be asked to describe and explain data, describe the stages of a process, how something works or describe an object or event.

#### Task 2

Test takers are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem.

Responses to both tasks must be written in a formal style.

The **General Training** version also includes two tasks, and is based on topics of general interest.

#### Task 1

Test takers are presented with a situation and are asked to write a letter requesting information or explaining the situation. The letter may be personal, semi-formal or formal in style.

#### Task 2

Test takers are asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. The essay can be slightly more personal in style than the Academic Writing Task 2 essay.

### Speaking 11–14 minutes

The Speaking component assesses the test taker's use of spoken English, and takes between 11 and 14 minutes to complete. Every test is digitally recorded and consists of three parts:

#### Part 1

Test takers answer general questions about themselves and a range of familiar topics, such as their home, family, work, studies and interests. This part lasts between four and five minutes.

#### Part 2

Test takers are given a booklet which asks them to talk about a particular topic. They have one minute to prepare before speaking for up to two minutes. The examiner may ask one or two questions on the same topic to finish this part of the test.

#### Part 3

Test takers are asked further questions which are connected to the topic in Part 2. These questions give the candidate an opportunity to discuss more abstract issues and ideas. This part lasts between four and five minutes.

The format of the Speaking test is common across both the Academic and General Training modules. It is structured in such a way that does not allow test takers to rehearse set responses beforehand.

## IELTS Academic

**IELTS Academic module** measures English language proficiency needed for an academic, higher education environment. The tasks and texts are accessible to all test-takers, irrespective of their subject focus.

### Listening\* (30 minutes)

- Four recorded monologues and conversations

### Reading (60 minutes)

- Three long reading passages with tasks
- Texts range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical
- Includes non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations
- Texts are authentic (e.g. taken from books, journals and newspapers)

### Writing (60 minutes)

- Writing task of at least 150 words where the candidate must summarise, describe or explain a table, graph, chart or diagram
- Short essay task of at least 250 words

### Speaking (11 to 14 minutes)

- Face-to-face interview
- Includes short questions, speaking at length about a familiar topic and a structured discussion

## IELTS General Training

**IELTS General Training module** measures English language proficiency in a practical, everyday context. The tasks and texts reflect both workplace and social situations.

### Listening\* (30 minutes)

- Four recorded monologues and conversations

### Reading (60 minutes)

- Three reading passages with tasks
- Section 1 contains two or three short factual texts
- Section 2 contains two short, work-related, factual texts
- Section 3 contains one longer text on a topic of general interest
- Texts are authentic (e.g. taken from company handbooks, official documents, books and newspapers)

### Writing (60 minutes)

- Letter writing task of at least 150 words
- Short essay task of at least 250 words

### Speaking (11 to 14 minutes)

- Face-to-face interview
- Includes short questions, speaking at length about a familiar topic and a structured discussion

## Key similarities

- The **Listening** and **Speaking** components are the same for both versions. The distinction between 'academic' and 'general' literacy has traditionally been seen as most marked in relation to reading and writing skills. The more socially-oriented language skills of listening and speaking are equally important in an academic study or professional context
- The same amount of time is allocated to complete the Listening and Speaking components in both the General Training and Academic Versions
- The **Reading** and **Writing** components are the same length in both versions
- Both modules have the same minimum word requirement
- The same assessment criteria and 9-band scale is used to grade both modules.

## Differences

The **Reading** component of the Academic and General Training versions is differentiated in terms of:

- the choice of texts (topic, genre, length, number, etc)
- the level of difficulty of the 40 test items. The Academic Reading module has more items pitched at bands 5-8, whereas the General Training has more items pitched at bands 3-6. This is a reflection of the different demands of Academic and General Training.

For **Writing**, the Academic and General Training modules are differentiated in terms of:

- the content and nature of the two writing tasks
- the contextual parameters of the tasks.

However, given the level of differentiation described above, this does not mean that the scores across Academic and General Training Reading or Writing modules are interchangeable.

# 3 IELTS scores and interpretation

<b>9</b>	<b>Expert user</b>	Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
<b>8</b>	<b>Very good user</b>	Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate words. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.
<b>7</b>	<b>Good user</b>	Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate words and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.
<b>6</b>	<b>Competent user</b>	Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate words and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language particularly in familiar situations.
<b>5</b>	<b>Modest user</b>	Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.
<b>4</b>	<b>Limited user</b>	Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
<b>3</b>	<b>Extremely limited user</b>	Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
<b>2</b>	<b>Intermittent user</b>	No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
<b>1</b>	<b>Non user</b>	Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
<b>0</b>	<b>Did not attempt the test</b>	No assessable information provided.

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## The IELTS 9-band scale

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There is no pass or fail in IELTS. Rather, all test results are reported on a clear 9-band scale (from 1, the lowest, to 9, the highest), as shown in the table opposite.

Test takers receive an overall band score as well as individual scores for each test component (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking).

The IELTS test provides an accurate picture of a candidate's language skills and abilities at a certain point in time. Skills and abilities inevitably diminish over time if not used. It is recommended that a Test Report Form more than **two years** old should only be accepted if it is accompanied by evidence that a candidate has actively maintained or improved their English.

### How to interpret IELTS

Test takers receive scores on a band scale from 1 to 9. A profile score is reported for each skill. The four individual scores are averaged and rounded to produce an overall band score. Overall band scores and scores for each component (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) are reported in whole bands or half bands.

#### Overall band score

Test takers receive a Test Report Form including or listing their overall band score and their sub-scores on each of the four components: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. Each of the component scores is equally weighted. The overall band score is calculated by taking the mean of the total of the four individual component scores.

Overall band scores are reported to the nearest whole or half band. The following rounding convention applies; if the average across the four skills ends in .25, it is rounded up to the next half band, and if it ends in .75, it is rounded up to the next whole band.

Thus, a test taker achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.0 for Writing and 7.0 for Speaking would be awarded an overall band score of 6.5 ( $25 \div 4 = 6.25 = \text{Band } 6.5$ ).

Likewise, a test taker achieving 4.0 for Listening, 3.5 for Reading, 4.0 for Writing and 4.0 for Speaking would be awarded an overall band score of 4.0 ( $15.5 \div 4 = 3.875 = \text{Band } 4.0$ ).

On the other hand, a test taker achieving 6.5 for Listening, 6.5 for Reading, 5.5 for Writing and 6.0 for Speaking would be awarded band 6 ( $24.5 \div 4 = 6.125 = \text{Band } 6$ ).

### Listening and Reading

IELTS Listening and Reading papers contain 40 items and each correct item is awarded one mark; the maximum raw score a candidate can achieve on a paper is 40. Band scores ranging from Band 1 to Band 9 are awarded to candidates on the basis of their raw scores.

All IELTS tasks are pre tested before being released as live items. This identifies minor differences in the difficulty level across tests. In order to equate different test versions, the band score boundaries are set so that all candidates' results relate to the same scale of achievement. This means, for example, that the Band 6 boundary may be set at a slightly different raw score across versions.

The tables below indicate the mean raw scores achieved by candidates at various levels in each of the Listening, Academic Reading and General Training Reading tests. They provide an indication of the number of marks required to achieve a particular band score.

#### Listening

Band score	Raw score out of 40
5	16
6	23
7	30
8	35

#### Academic Reading

Band score	Raw score out of 40
5	15
6	23
7	30
8	35

#### General Training Reading

Band score	Raw score out of 40
4	15
5	23
6	30
7	34

The Academic and General Training tests are graded to the same scale. The distinction between the two versions is one of genre or discourse type. Academic tests may contain source texts featuring more difficult vocabulary or greater complexity of style. It is usual that, to secure a given band score, a greater number of questions must be answered correctly on a General Training Reading component.

### Writing and Speaking

When marking the Writing and Speaking components, examiners use detailed performance descriptors which describe written and spoken performance at each of the 9 IELTS bands.

#### Writing

Examiners award a band score for each of four criterion areas:

Criterion	Weighting
Task achievement (Task 1)/ Task response (Task 2)	25%
Coherence and cohesion	25%
Lexical resource	25%
Grammatical range and accuracy	25%

#### Speaking

Examiners award a band score for each of four criterion areas:

Criterion	Weighting
Fluency and coherence	25%
Lexical resource	25%
Grammatical range and accuracy	25%
Pronunciation	25%

The four criteria are equally weighted.

#### Assessment criteria (band descriptors)

Versions of the band descriptors for Writing and Speaking have been developed to help stakeholders better understand the level of performance required to attain a particular band score in each of the criterion areas. IELTS examiners undergo intensive face to face training and standardisation to ensure that they can apply the descriptors (these are available on page 18-23).

# 5 Tips from teachers

The criteria for the different IELTS band scores make it clear which areas of language need to be developed, thereby setting clear goals and objectives. Teaching techniques for IELTS include presenting language elements such as grammar and vocabulary in a wider context.

The topics in IELTS are both interesting and contemporary, and are based in the real world. This means teachers can bring the outside world into their IELTS classes by using a range of authentic source materials adapted to test preparation.





## Tips from Teachers

### 01 General

**Make sure that your students:**

- are familiar with the format and types of tasks in the different sections of the IELTS test
- know what is expected of them and how best to approach each section
- are aware of the time allowed for each section and include timed practice in class
- read the instructions carefully and follow them.

### 02 Listening

**Make sure that your students:**

- think about the context before they listen and identify the type of information they will need to listen for
- read the questions before they hear the text and use the time between each section to prepare for the following section.

### 03 Reading

**Make sure that your students:**

- use reading skills such as skimming and scanning – they will need to use these skills to answer all the questions in 1 hour
- know how best to approach each type of reading task
- answer the questions and transfer their answers to the answer sheet within the time allowed.

### 04 Writing


**Make sure that your students:**

- analyse the question carefully and plan their answer before starting to write
- keep in mind the reader and the purpose when writing
- structure their writing logically and clearly
- decide on a position and use examples and evidence to support points they make in task 2
- are familiar with the assessment criteria.

### 05 Speaking

**Make sure that your students:**

- feel confident and remind them to relax and enjoy the conversation with the examiner
- listen carefully to the questions
- use fillers and hesitation devices if they need 'thinking time' before answering
- realise it is their language level not their opinions which are being evaluated
- are familiar with the assessment criteria.



“Test takers receive an objective assessment of their English proficiency and have a clearer idea of where they need to make most improvements.”

*Lyndell King, teacher*

## IELTS Speaking assessment criteria (band descriptors – public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar</li> <li>Speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features</li> <li>Develops topics fully and appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics</li> <li>Uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content related and only rarely to search for language</li> <li>Develops topics coherently and appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning</li> <li>Uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies</li> <li>Uses paraphrase effectively as required</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence</li> <li>May demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction</li> <li>Uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics</li> <li>Uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices</li> <li>Uses paraphrase effectively</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation</li> <li>Uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriateness</li> <li>Generally paraphrases successfully</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going</li> <li>May over-use certain connectives and discourse markers</li> <li>Produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility</li> <li>Attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction</li> <li>Links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice</li> <li>Rarely attempts paraphrase</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaks with long pauses</li> <li>Has limited ability to link simple sentences</li> <li>Gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information</li> <li>Has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pauses lengthily before most words</li> <li>Little communication possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only produces isolated words or memorised utterances</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No communication possible</li> <li>No rateable language</li> </ul>	
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not attend</li> </ul>	

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Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately</li> <li>• Produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety</li> <li>• Sustains flexible use of features throughout</li> <li>• Is effortless to understand</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of structures flexibly</li> <li>• Produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriateness or basic/unsystematic errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of pronunciation features</li> <li>• Sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses</li> <li>• Is easy to understand throughout; 1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility</li> <li>• Frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows all the positive features of band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 8</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility</li> <li>• May make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control</li> <li>• Shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained</li> <li>• Can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy</li> <li>• Uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows all the positive features of band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 6</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare</li> <li>• Errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a limited range of pronunciation features</li> <li>• Attempts to control features but lapses are frequent</li> <li>• Mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances</li> <li>• Makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows some of the features of band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 4</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot produce basic sentence forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech is often unintelligible</li> </ul>

## IELTS Task 1 Writing assessment criteria (band descriptors – public version)

Band	Task achievement	Coherence and cohesion
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully satisfies all the requirements of the task</li> <li>Clearly presents a fully developed response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention</li> <li>Skilfully manages paragraphing</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covers all requirements of the task sufficiently</li> <li>Presents, highlights and illustrates key features / bullet points clearly and appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sequences information and ideas logically</li> <li>Manages all aspects of cohesion well</li> <li>Uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covers the requirements of the task</li> <li>(Academic) presents a clear overview of main trends, differences or stages</li> <li>(General training) presents a clear purpose, with the tone consistent and appropriate</li> <li>Clearly presents and highlights key features / bullet points but could be more fully extended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout</li> <li>Uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addresses the requirements of the task</li> <li>(Academic) presents an overview with information appropriately selected</li> <li>(General training) presents a purpose that is generally clear; there may be inconsistencies in tone</li> <li>Presents and adequately highlights key features / bullet points but details may be irrelevant, inappropriate or inaccurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression</li> <li>Uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical</li> <li>May not always use referencing clearly or appropriately</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally addresses the task; the format may be inappropriate in places</li> <li>(Academic) recounts detail mechanically with no clear overview; there may be no data to support the description</li> <li>(General training) may present a purpose for the letter that is unclear at times; the tone may be variable and sometimes inappropriate</li> <li>Presents, but inadequately covers, key features / bullet points; there may be a tendency to focus on details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression</li> <li>Makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices</li> <li>May be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempts to address the task but does not cover all key features / bullet points; the format may be inappropriate</li> <li>(General training) fails to clearly explain the purpose of the letter; the tone may be inappropriate</li> <li>May confuse key features / bullet points with detail; parts may be unclear, irrelevant, repetitive or inaccurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response</li> <li>Uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fails to address the task, which may have been completely misunderstood</li> <li>Presents limited ideas which may be largely irrelevant/ repetitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not organise ideas logically</li> <li>May use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer is barely related to the task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has very little control of organisational features</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer is completely unrelated to the task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fails to communicate any message</li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not attend</li> <li>Does not attempt the task in any way</li> <li>Writes a totally memorised response</li> </ul>	

Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings</li> <li>• Skilfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation</li> <li>• Produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of structures</li> <li>• The majority of sentences are error-free</li> <li>• Makes only very occasional errors or inappropriateness</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision</li> <li>• Uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation</li> <li>• May produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a variety of complex structures</li> <li>• Produces frequent error-free sentences</li> <li>• Has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task</li> <li>• Attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy</li> <li>• Makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms</li> <li>• Makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task</li> <li>• May make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only a limited range of structures</li> <li>• Attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences</li> <li>• May make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task</li> <li>• Has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may cause strain for the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses</li> <li>• Some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may severely distort the message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary; essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can only use a few isolated words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot use sentence forms at all</li> </ul>

## IELTS Task 2 Writing assessment criteria (band descriptors – public version)

Band	Task achievement	Coherence and cohesion
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully addresses all parts of the task</li> <li>Presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention</li> <li>Skilfully manages paragraphing</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sufficiently addresses all parts of the task</li> <li>Presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sequences information and ideas logically</li> <li>Manages all aspects of cohesion well</li> <li>Uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addresses all parts of the task</li> <li>Presents a clear position throughout the response</li> <li>Presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to over generalise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout</li> <li>Uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use</li> <li>Presents a clear central topic within each paragraph</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others</li> <li>Presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive</li> <li>Presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression</li> <li>Uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical</li> <li>May not always use referencing clearly or appropriately</li> <li>Uses paragraphing, but not always logically</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places</li> <li>Expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no conclusions drawn</li> <li>Presents some main ideas but these are limited and not sufficiently developed; there may be irrelevant detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression</li> <li>Makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices</li> <li>May be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution</li> <li>May not write in paragraphs, or paragraphing may be inadequate</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responds to the task only in a minimal way or the answer is tangential; the format may be inappropriate</li> <li>Presents a position but this is unclear</li> <li>Presents some main ideas but these are difficult to identify and may be repetitive, irrelevant or not well supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response</li> <li>Uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive</li> <li>May not write in paragraphs or their use may be confusing</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not adequately address any part of the task</li> <li>Does not express a clear position</li> <li>Presents few ideas, which are largely undeveloped or irrelevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not organise ideas logically</li> <li>May use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barely responds to the task</li> <li>Does not express a position</li> <li>May attempt to present one or two ideas but there is no development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has very little control of organisational features</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer is completely unrelated to the task</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fails to communicate any message</li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not attend</li> <li>Does not attempt the task in any way</li> <li>Writes a totally memorised response</li> </ul>	

Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings</li> <li>• Skilfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation</li> <li>• Produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a wide range of structures</li> <li>• The majority of sentences are error-free</li> <li>• Makes only very occasional errors or inappropriateness</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision</li> <li>• Uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation</li> <li>• May produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a variety of complex structures</li> <li>• Produces frequent error-free sentences</li> <li>• Has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task</li> <li>• Attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy</li> <li>• Makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms</li> <li>• Makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task</li> <li>• May make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only a limited range of structures</li> <li>• Attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences</li> <li>• May make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task</li> <li>• Has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may cause strain for the reader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses</li> <li>• Some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling errors may severely distort the message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary; essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can only use a few isolated words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot use sentence forms at all</li> </ul>

# How IELTS maps to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR)

## How should the CEFR be used by recognising institutions wishing to set language ability requirements?

In fulfilling its purpose as a common reference tool, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages was not designed to provide the basis for precise equating, nor was it intended to be a prescriptive tool to impose standardised solutions. Rather it was designed as a common framework of reference, primarily intended as 'a tool for reflection, communications and empowerment', as described by John Trim, its coordinating author, (Saville, N (2005)). The IELTS partners recommend that all test result users should look at the IELTS bandscore descriptors and use the *IELTS Scores Explained DVD* to establish the appropriate level of language ability required for their particular institution or course.

However, test users may also find the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages helpful. The Framework, a series of descriptions of abilities at different learning levels, which can be applied to any language, can provide a starting point for interpreting and comparing different language qualifications, and is increasingly used as a way of benchmarking language ability not only within Europe but worldwide.

To help test users understand the relationship between IELTS band scores and the six CEFR levels, Cambridge ESOL has conducted a number of studies to map the IELTS scale to the CEFR, drawing on the interrelationship between IELTS and other Cambridge ESOL qualifications and the known relationship of these latter qualifications to the CEFR.

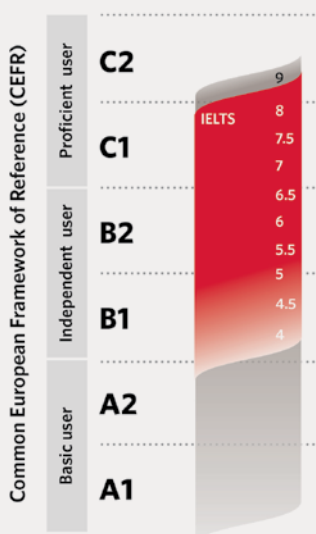


Figure 1: The mapping of the IELTS scale to the Common European Framework above is derived from the interrelationship between IELTS and the Cambridge ESOL Main Suite qualifications and the mapping of these latter qualifications to the CEFR. Further information on this can be found at [www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/research/cefr/index.html](http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/research/cefr/index.html)

## General information

Making comparisons between scores on different tests is challenging because many of the current range of test products differ in their design, purpose, and format (Taylor, 2004a). Candidates' aptitude and preparation for a particular type of test may also vary and individual candidates or groups of candidates may perform better in certain tests than in others.

Specifying the relationship between a test product and the CEFR is challenging because, in order to function as a framework, the CEFR is deliberately underspecified (Davidson & Fulcher, 2007; Milanovic, 2009; Weir, 2005). Establishing the relationship is also not a one-off activity, but rather involves the accumulation of evidence over time (e.g. it needs to be shown that test quality and standards are maintained).

The relationship of IELTS with the CEFR is complex as IELTS is not a level-based test, but rather designed to span a much broader proficiency continuum. It also utilises a different 9-point band scoring system; thus, there will not be a one-to-one correspondence between IELTS scores and CEFR levels. It is important to bear in mind the differences in test purpose, test format, test populations, and measurement scales when seeking to make comparisons.

With the above in mind, Cambridge ESOL has conducted a number of research projects since the late 1990s to explore how IELTS band scores align with the CEFR levels. A number of these were summarised in Taylor (2004b), while cautioning that, "As we grow in our understanding of the relationship between IELTS and the CEFR levels, so the frame of reference may need to be revised accordingly."

Note that the IELTS band scores referred to in Figure 1 above are the overall band scores, not the individual module band scores for listening, reading, writing and speaking. It is important to recognise that the purpose of this figure is to communicate the relationship between IELTS performances and the CEFR. They should not be interpreted as reflecting strong claims about exact equivalence between assessment products or the scores they generate, for the reasons given in Taylor (2004a).



The current alignment is based upon a growing body of internal and external research, some of which has also appeared in peer-reviewed academic journals, attesting to their quality (e.g. Hawkey & Barker, 2004). This research has been further combined with long established experience of test use within education and society, as well as feedback from a range of stakeholders regarding the uses of test results for particular purposes.

As further work, such as that being undertaken in the English Profile project, enriches our understanding of the CEFR levels, further refinements may be possible.

#### Further information

##### **Q1. Some IELTS band scores are shown as borderline (e.g. it is not clear whether band 5 is B1 or B2). How should institutions and organisations interpret this?**

As IELTS preceded the CEFR, IELTS band score thresholds have never aligned exactly with the CEFR transition points. Previously (Taylor 2004a), we provided advice as to the score on IELTS that a candidate who was at a given CEFR level might achieve. However, our research shows that a C1 minimum threshold would fall between the 6.5 and 7 thresholds on the IELTS scale. Therefore, whilst many 6.5 candidates would be at C1, a number will be marginally below. The present table makes this clearer. So if an institution requires a high degree of confidence that an applicant is at C1, they may wish to set a requirement of 7, rather than 6.5.

##### **Q2. Does IELTS differentiate at C2 level?**

Band scores of 8.5 and higher constitute C2 level performance. Band 8 is borderline.

##### **Q3. If a student has an IELTS score of 6.5 should this be treated as a B2 equivalent score?**

6.5 is borderline B2/C1. It is for institutions to decide alignment to a particular level of the CEFR is critical. Otherwise, our general advice remains that an overall IELTS band 7.0 will probably meet the language requirements of most university courses, though 6.5 may be adequate for courses which are less linguistically demanding. Institutions need to consider a range of factors in setting their requirements, including, for example the amount of pre-sessional or in-sessional language-learning support which will be available to prospective students, and whether a minimum standard should also be specified in a particular individual skill.

##### **Q4. How does this compare to the mappings that other language testers have published?**

We do not comment on the benchmarking exercises that other language testers have provided.

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