



IELTS Speaking Questions

SET A

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Questions compiled by Manoj Mohan



THE LearnEng
CENTRE

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About the compiler:

Manoj Mohan is a Cambridge CELTA-certified English Language Teaching (ELT) expert. He has worked for the British Council in different roles, including Teacher of English (2009 – 2013), IELTS Teacher Trainer (2012 – 2014), and Cambridge English Examiner (2013 – 2016). He continues offering his services to several organisations in various capacities. He is also the Centre Head of **The LearnEng Centre (TLC)**, an English language academy located in Kochi, Kerala.

IELTS experience:

Manoj Mohan has delivered the IELTS Train the Trainer (TTT) course for the British Council across South India. Between 2011 and 2012, he led on a project to launch all IELTS courses – IELTS (42 hrs), IELTS Intensive (20 hrs) & IELTS TTT (3 days) – offered by British Council Chennai at the time. He has also passed Cambridge's clerical marking test for the listening and reading modules in IELTS, apart from having experience as an IELTS Test Day Administrator (TDA). In short, his understanding of the IELTS exam is comprehensive.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. How are these IELTS speaking questions compiled?

Compiling IELTS speaking questions is a meticulous task that involves a considerable amount of time. Since Cambridge English doesn't publish live materials, questions are sourced from candidates who take the test. What makes this task particularly challenging is the fact that different candidates may recollect the same topic and related questions differently, so more often than not, it takes an educated guess to formulate questions accurately.

2. What are my chances of receiving the very same questions in the IELTS speaking test?

While there is **no guarantee**, there is a **high likelihood** that most of your speaking questions are from the pool we publish. For instance, about 95% percent of candidates from our academy have received the same questions in the actual test so far. Remember, part 1 and part 2 questions are easier to identify, whereas questions in part 3 of the test may depend a lot on the responses you provide. Having said that, the topic areas will remain the same, so prior knowledge would still be an advantage.

3. If my test centre is in the Far East, Middle East, Europe, Australasia, or North America, will I still find these questions useful?

Although there is no conclusive proof, a cursory glance of any IELTS blog that has comments from test takers from various countries should convince you that the same questions are often used across test centres the world over.

4. Is it sufficient if I go prepared for the speaking test with answers to all questions in this set?

No. We generally publish two packs of speaking questions – **Set A** and **Set B**. It is important that you are familiar with the contents of both sets, as you may receive questions from either.

5. How important is the validity period mentioned on the cover?

Extremely important. Before you begin preparing, make sure your test date (i.e. the date when the listening, reading, and writing tests are conducted) falls within the validity period. If not, the questions in the particular set may not be useful at all.

6. What is the relevance of the version number mentioned on the cover?

As mentioned earlier, questions are sourced from test takers, so this document may undergo changes whenever new information comes to light. So, remember to use the latest version of the set you've bought.

7. How do I purchase a set of speaking questions?

You can buy our digital products using **Instamojo**, a simplified payment solution that lets you make purchases via credit/debit card or internet banking. Just click on the **Buy Now** button and follow instructions. Once you make the payment, a **download file** button will appear on the screen. Alternatively, you'll receive an email from Instamojo confirming receipt of payment, which also has a link to download the file.

8. How can I get hold of the latest version of the set I have bought?

Simple! Save the email you receive from **Instamojo** on making payment for a set of speaking questions. This email should have a download button that can be used to download your copy of the speaking questions. Like our Facebook page and keep visiting it: <https://www.facebook.com/The.LearnEng.Centre/>

Whenever an updated version becomes available, we'll make an announcement on our Facebook page. You can then use the same download button in the email from Instamojo to access newer versions.

Remember to type in your email address and phone number correctly while making the payment on Instamojo. If you have any difficulty accessing newer versions of the digital product you buy, we can always email a copy to you; just send us a request on Facebook along with proof of purchase.

9. Why aren't prompts printed along with the part 2 topics in this document?

In the IELTS speaking test, the candidate receives a task card with the question, which is followed by 4 prompts – they usually begin with wh-words (who, why, how, when, which, what, or where). There are two reasons why prompts aren't included here.

One is that on completing the speaking test, test takers aren't always able to remember what prompts they received in part 2. A more important reason is that the candidate is under no obligation to use the prompts printed on the task card. The wh-questions are included to help candidates, so candidates may choose to use them or ignore them completely. As an English teacher and assessment expert, I feel it is better if you form the ability to read a part 2 topic and come up with your own wh-questions related to it.

10. I am preparing to take the IELTS General Training exam, so would these questions be useful?

Yes. The listening and speaking modules are the same in both formats of IELTS – Academic and General Training.

11. Why aren't model answers provided along with the questions given here?

There is a general consensus among teachers about the need to discourage candidates from learning answers by heart. While this might not be the case in India, let us not forget that IELTS examiners are language experts who are trained to spot rote learning. I have always been against this practice, as it lands candidates in trouble during a speaking exercise as interactive as the one in IELTS. Instead, focus on learning vocabulary related to topics so that you can come up with your own answers.

Remember, IELTS is an international test, so your objective should be to **sound as natural as possible while producing language**, be it in the speaking or writing part.

Assessment criteria explained:

The speaking test is assessed by certified IELTS examiners, who use detailed band descriptors to evaluate a candidate's language ability. These band descriptors describe spoken performance at each of the nine IELTS bands. There are separate descriptors for each of the four areas assessed – Fluency and coherence, Lexical resource, Grammatical range and accuracy, and Pronunciation. Remember, all four areas carry equal weighting.

Here are some band descriptors describing fluency and coherence at band 7:

- *speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence*
- *may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction*
- *uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility*

As you can see, unless you happen to be a language expert, these descriptions may not be of much help. So, here are some key points to remember.

Fluency and coherence

- Show a willingness to speak at length on a topic, especially in part 3. However, this doesn't mean you should blabber on without giving enough thought to what you are saying. Remember, a high rate of speech doesn't mean you are fluent. Instead, arrange ideas in a logical order by focusing on what you are saying. The key to achieving this is for you to maintain an even pace throughout the test: not too fast, not too slow.
- Use a range of discourse markers – words (*although, besides, to my mind, etc.*) which help you connect different parts of a sentence, or show the relationship between different sentences. Remember not to overuse such expressions, so employ a linking word only when needed. In other words, don't use discourse markers just for the sake of using them.

Lexical resource

- Show an awareness of style and appropriacy while using vocabulary. Think whether the word you're about to use fits the context or not. For example, if you are describing how you spend time with friends, use words such as *chat, hang out, and chill*. You shouldn't be saying that you *hold meetings with your friends periodically!*
- Learn to use collocations (i.e. words in English that occur together frequently) accurately, as this is extremely important. While it is good to use uncommon vocabulary, if the collocations are all wrong, you simply don't benefit.
- Use less common words (e.g. *fortitude* is less common than *courage*) and idiomatic language if you are aiming for a score of 7.0 or above. However, this doesn't mean you keep using proverbs! Idiomatic expressions include phrasal verbs (e.g. ask around) and phrases (e.g. over the moon).

Grammatical range and accuracy

- Produce a range of sentences, both simple and complex structures. Remember, if you were to produce just basic sentence forms – e.g. *I like pizzas* (subject + verb + object) or *She is nice* (subject + verb + adjective) – it can take you only as far as band 4.
- Reduce the number of errors you make while speaking. Common problem areas for candidates include subject-verb agreement (e.g. *He eats*, NOT ~~*He eat*~~) and prepositions (*John is good at sports*, NOT ~~*John is good in sports*~~). What is most important is that you avoid glaring errors – misuse of language that leads to any misunderstanding or a complete breakdown in communication.

Pronunciation

- The range of pronunciation features assessed includes phonemes, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, rhythm, and connected speech.
- Form an ability to use intonation – the rise and fall of your voice in speaking – as this is an extremely important area. For instance, if you are a beginner, learn to use basic intonation patterns, such as rising intonation and falling intonation, accurately.
- Learn to speak in smaller chunks so that there is no loss of rhythm when you produce long sentences.
- Do NOT fake an accent, as nothing can be more off-putting. Remember, pronunciation is assessed, accent isn't.

Speaking Part 1: Overview

What to expect	The test begins with the examiner introducing themselves and asking you questions about familiar topics: home, work, studies, family, interests, etc. To ensure test-taking experience is the same across candidates, questions in this part are taken from a script and delivered verbatim.
What is assessed	This part aims to assess the candidate's ability to respond to questions on everyday topics that they are familiar with. Needless to say, it is the easiest part of the test, so it helps candidates settle their nerves.
Duration	4 to 5 minutes
No of questions	Variable You can expect anywhere between 6 to 11 questions on up to 3 topics

1. *Let's talk about where you live.*

Where do you live at the moment?

How long have you lived there for?

What do you like about the place where you live?

2. *Let's talk about what you do. Do you work or are you a student?*

What work do you do?

Was any special training required for this job?

Will you have to undergo any training for this job in the future?

What do you study?

Why have you chosen to study this subject?

What do you find most interesting about your course?

3. *Let's talk about friends.*

Where do you generally meet your friends?

What do you enjoy doing with your friends?

Are you still in contact with friends from school? [Why?]

4. *Let's move on to talk about everyday travel.*

What transport did you use to get here today?

Do you prefer travelling to work / college by private or public transport? [Why?]

How long does it take you to reach your workplace / college?

What do you usually do during this journey?

5. *Let's now talk about rain.*

Does the place where you live have a rainy season?

Do you like playing in the rain?

Have you ever forgotten to take an umbrella or a raincoat on a rainy day?

Do you think rains can affect people's moods?

6. *Let's talk about being on time.*

How do you usually tell the time?

What do you do when you have to wait for something?

Have you ever got late for an event? [When?]

Do you feel that people were more punctual in the past?

7. *Let's now discuss using computers.*

Do you use computers at work or for study?

Did you have a computer as a child?

8. *Let's move on to talk about spending time at home.*

How often do you spend time at home?

What do you like to do while at home? [Why?]

How did you spend your time at home as a child?