

IELTS

Speaking Strategies for Success

Academic & General

Matt McGinniss & Matt Cudmore



IELTS
SERIES

Table of Contents

[IELTS Speaking Strategies for Success \(IELTS Series\)](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Strategy # 1 - Know the Speaking Test Structure](#)

[Strategy # 2 - Part 1 Personal Questions](#)

[Strategy # 3 - Part 2 Planning](#)

[Strategy # 4 - Part 3 Opinions](#)

[Strategy # 5 - Be Confident with the Examiner](#)

[Strategy # 6 - Understand the Scoring System](#)

[Strategy # 7 - Fluency and Coherence](#)

[Strategy # 8 - Use the AREC Strategy.](#)

[Strategy # 9 - Use Powerful Words](#)

[Strategy # 10 - Use Native Speaker Phrases](#)

[Strategy # 11 - Use Signposting Language](#)

[Strategy # 12 - Grammatical Range and Accuracy.](#)

[Strategy # 13 - Use Different Verb Tenses](#)

[Strategy # 14 - Get Native Speaker Feedback](#)

[Strategy # 15 - Word Stress and Length](#)

[Strategy # 16 - Improve Sound Pronunciation](#)

[Strategy # 17 - Know the Flow of the Speaking Test](#)

[Strategy # 18 - Repeat the Question](#)

[Strategy # 19 - Record Yourself](#)

[Strategy # 20 - Use English Every Day.](#)

[More Information](#)

[Sign up for Matt McGinniss's Mailing List](#)

IELTS Speaking Strategies for Success

Academic & General

by Matt McGinniss & Matt Cudmore

© Published by Englishtec Pty Ltd

<https://www.englishtec.com/>

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means or stored in a database or retrieval system without written consent from the authors. Copying any part of this book for any purpose other than your own personal use is a violation of International Copyright Laws.

Any unauthorised reprint or use of this material is prohibited.

Disclaimer

The authors and publishers of this book shall in no event be held liable for any loss or damages that may occur due to information contained in this book.

Introduction

WELCOME TO IELTS SPEAKING Strategies for Success – Academic & General.

It's great that you have taken a positive step towards success in IELTS by using this book.

Our goal is to help you get the IELTS score you need. We genuinely believe you can do it by following our strategies and language structures.

We start with the first strategy that involves understanding the exact structure of the speaking test. We then move through a series of strategies that will prepare you for the types of questions you can expect to hear on the test and build your confidence on test day.

Are you ready to build your speaking skills? Let's get started!

Strategy # 1 - Know the Speaking Test Structure

THE **speaking** section of the IELTS test occurs between the test candidate (you) and the examiner (a qualified IELTS examiner).

The key to success is knowing the **structure** the test. This will help you prepare to speak **fluently, accurately** and for a **long time**.

In total it takes about **14 minutes** to complete and the test is the **same test** for both **General** and **Academic** IELTS.

For the paper-based and computer-based test, you will do the **same test** section with a real-life examiner.

The best thing about the speaking test is that you **already know** the types of questions you will be asked and the way you need to answer them. We call this the test structure.

The structure of the **speaking test** is as follows:

Part 1: Personal Questions

Time: 4-5 minutes

Style: Examiner asks questions and you answer

Speaking Skills:

- Introducing yourself
- Talking about family, hometown and other common topics and situations
- Giving basic opinions

Part 2: Individual Long Turn

Time: 1 minute planning and note-taking, 2 minutes answering

Style: Candidate is shown a topic to prepare and can take notes

Speaking Skills:

- Organising ideas
- Continuous speaking without interruption
- Showing a range of language skills

Part 3: Developing a Discussion

Time: 4-5 minutes

Style: Examiner asks questions and you answer

Speaking Skills:

- Explaining more complex ideas
- Expressing opinions and beliefs

Strategy # 2 - Part 1 Personal Questions

BEFORE THE TEST YOU should practice talking about your personal information in English. Be prepared to talk about topics including:

- family
 - friends
 - town/city
 - culture
 - festivals
 - events
 - sport
 - exercise
 - movies
 - hobbies
 - study
 - job
 - future career
 - lifestyle
-

EXAMPLE PART 1 SCRIPT

The following are some example questions and answers that you might hear in the speaking test:

1. Where are you from?

I'm from Castle Town, which is a town located in the South-West of Amazonia. This is the place where I lived until I was twenty years old. After that I moved to Capital City, which as you might know is in the north of the county.

2. Tell me about your hometown.

My hometown is a traditional place that is not very often visited by tourists. It has a population of approximately fifty thousand people and because it is located close to the ocean the main industries include fishing and farming. Although it is a quiet town, it has certainly experienced rapid growth in recent years.

3. Tell me about the home where you live now.

I currently live with my cousin's family in an apartment near the city. The apartment is quite small, with one main living room, two bedrooms and a bathroom. It's on the third story of an apartment block so it can get quite noisy at night. The best thing about it is the location. Being close to the city means it is convenient to go out during the week and on weekends.

4. Tell me about your family.

There are four members of my family. My father works as an engineer for a large company. My mother is an accountant, and my sister is a student like me. I have a very close relationship with all members of my family and we often gather for meals on the weekends and birthday celebrations.

5. Tell me about your work or study.

At the moment I work in a retail store in a large shopping mall in the city. The shop sells clothes so I am gaining a great deal of experience in customer service and cash handling. Although this experience is quite helpful, I look forward to the opportunity to get a professional job at some stage in the future.

6. What form of transport do you use to get to work?

Normally, I take the bus. This journey takes approximately thirty minutes from where I live at the moment. Occasionally, my cousin gives me a lift in his car. This is much shorter; it only takes about fifteen minutes.

7. What do you like doing in your spare time?

I don't really have any hobbies that I do on a regular basis. However, I like playing computer games, especially on my tablet computer. Although I know playing games can be addictive, I try to limit the amount of time I

spend playing to no more than about three hours per week. Aside from that, I quite like cooking, and my friends often say that I'm quite a good cook.

8. Do you like going to the movies?

Yes, I often go to the movies during my holidays when I have more spare time. I like watching action movies the most, although I also like comedies and sometimes animated movies.

9. Do you like watching television?

Yes, although I try not to watch too much. Generally, I watch about one hour of television per night, and sometimes more on the weekend. For example, last weekend I watched three movies on television. It was a lazy weekend.

10. What's your favourite type of food?

I like most types of food, especially food from my own country and pasta. As I mentioned before, I quite like cooking, so if I have a good recipe and the right ingredients I'm always happy to try and cook a new meal, just to see how it will turn out.

11. How do you think eating habits in your country are changing?

I suppose people have less time than they had before, so people are choosing convenience food more often than they did in the past. For example, if people have had a long day at work and do not feel like cooking when they get home, they may just decide to buy some fast food on the way home. On the other hand, some people are being influenced by international cuisine, so you could say their eating habits are changing to reflect this.

12. Do you like shopping?

Yes, I quite like shopping. In particular, I like shopping for interesting things such as books and computer games. Shopping for clothes can also be fun, especially for new clothes that I will be wearing when I go out. However, I must admit, I don't enjoy shopping for food. To be honest, I find that more of a chore than anything else.

13. What is an important event for your culture?

Our culture has a rich history so there are many events that we celebrate. One event that is gaining popularity is Christmas. I think this is a global event now. At Christmas time we usually gather with our family, eat a big meal and give each other gifts. It's a nice time of the year to reflect on the good things that have happened and spend time with the people who are closest to us.

14. Do you do play sport or do exercise?

Yes, I play football every Wednesday afternoon. I usually play with my friends at the local sports oval. It's not a serious game; it's more about having a good time. In addition, I like to swim as much as I can. I think swimming is a good way to exercise all the muscles in your body.

15. What outdoor activities do you like to do on the weekend?

On the weekend I often like to go bike riding. This is an enjoyable activity with the benefit of helping you to stay fit and healthy. It's also a good idea to have a destination in mind, so you can push yourself to reach your goal. For instance, I usually try to ride to somewhere I haven't been before. This makes the ride more interesting and keeps me motivated to keep cycling.

Strategy # 3 - Part 2 Planning

IN PART 2 YOU ARE GIVEN a card with a topic and some points you should talk about. You will then have one minute to plan your ideas. You **must take notes** during this stage, in case you freeze up and forget points during your 2 minutes' speaking time.

The question card will include info like this:

Describe a city you would like to visit.

You should say:

- **where it is**
- **how you know about it**
- **what you would like to do there**

and explain why you would like to visit this part of the world.

THE KEY POINTS YOU must cover can be underlined and notes made like this:

Describe a city you would like to visit.

You should say:

- **where it is NEW YORK NE COAST USA NY STATE**
- **how you know about it MAGAZINES TV MOVIES**
- **what you would like to do there EMPIRE STATE BUILDING SHOPPING**

and explain why you would like to visit this part of the world.
EXCITING

YOUR ANSWER MAY BE as follows:

*“The city I would like to visit is **New York**. New York is **located** in northeast of the United States of America, in the state which is also called New York. It is situated on the main island of Manhattan, and is surrounded by other areas such as Long Island, Brooklyn and so on.*

*Because I’ve never actually been there, most of what I know about New York comes from popular culture, including **magazines, television and movies**. In particular, it is common to hear stories that come from New York on the television news. Because it is the headquarters of the United Nations, and so many celebrities live there, there always seem to be stories coming from New York about out some big announcement or fashion event.*

*If I could travel to New York, I’d like to visit the **Empire State Building** because it’s one of the most famous skyscrapers in the world, and it provides spectacular views over the city. I’d also like to take a walk through **Central Park** and go **shopping** in the famous department stores.*

*I suppose the main reason for visiting New York is because it is an **exciting city**. They say it is the city that never sleeps, and if I had the opportunity to visit New York, I’m sure I wouldn’t get much sleep either, as I would be keen to explore as much of the city as I could.*

Strategy # 4 - Part 3 Opinions

PART 3 IS OFTEN CONSIDERED to be the **most challenging part** of the speaking test. This is because the candidate must give answers that express **opinions** and demonstrate **critical thinking**.

You need to be **prepared** to answer questions on topics such as:

Education, Public Transport, Environment, Population, the Internet, Science, Technology, Food, Economics, Inventions, Travel, Art, Water, Law, Society

Let's take the example of food and look at how part 3 questions may be presented, and how they can be answered:

1. DO YOU THINK EATING habits have changed in the past twenty years?

Yes, absolutely. I certainly agree with that statement. Clearly there have been **significant** changes to our society that have made our lifestyle more fast-paced and in many ways more demanding. The result of this is that we have less time to spend cooking and we become reliant on fast food restaurants such as McDonalds and KFC. **Of course this isn't the case for all countries around the world**, as some places retain their traditional cultures when it comes to food. **However, overall, I'd have to say that in most large cities in the developed world there has undoubtedly been a significant shift in habits and behaviour.**

2. What are the positive and negative aspects of these changes?

As with any changes, there are a number of pluses and minuses. In terms of pluses, **you could argue that** more people have access to food than they did twenty years ago, and there is certainly more choice available, which most people would probably regard as a good development. However, the drawbacks may be that important parts of the culture are

being **diminished** over time, as large multi-national companies enter the markets of newly globalising countries and make the local restaurants less appealing and competitive. In many ways I think that's a shame, especially for people who run these traditional restaurants and won't be able to make a living in the way that they used to. And it's also a shame for the children growing up, who won't get to experience the cuisine of a country that adds to its culture.

3. How do you think eating habits might change in the future?

That's a good question. **As with anything to do with the future, it's impossible to predict with any certainty what may or may not occur.** However, I believe that the process of globalisation will most likely continue, and that the trend towards more international foods, provided by large international companies is likely to continue. I **suppose** this will mean more hamburgers, more chips and even more convenience food. On the other hand, there might be a reaction against that. There might be some people who refuse to buy from large multinational companies, meaning that the traditional dishes will continue to be served in the future. At least I hope that's what occurs.

4. HOW IMPORTANT IS television advertising for eating habits these days?

Television advertising is absolutely critical, **no question about it.** As we all know, television plays a very important part in the way people think about all aspects of society. Therefore, if there are advertisements for fast food such as pizza and fried chicken on television, you can be sure that millions of people will be thinking about these food options and decide to buy them. Personally, I believe this is a major concern when advertising such as this occurs during the times of the day when young people are watching television, especially children after they come home from school, **although it depends** on how easily influenced children are by this form of advertising. Another issue is that because of the high cost of advertising on television, it's really only the large companies that can pay for this advertising, instead of the smaller restaurants that serve more traditional food that is often healthier and more connected to the local culture. **So yes,**

there's no doubt that television plays a critical part in the eating behaviours.

Comment:

Overall, the candidate did well by providing a number of **opinions** that demonstrated a

high level of critical thinking.

IN ADDITION, THE CANDIDATE also did well by including the following strong points of advanced speaking:

- Using a **powerful statement** that agrees with the statement in question 1.
- Discussing **both sides** of each question.
- Using **you** to mean '**any person**' in question 2.
- Using speculation verbs including **suppose** in question 3.
- Talking generally about the future in question 3 to gain more **thinking time**.
- Using **it depends** in a sentence to discuss other possibilities in question 4.
- Returning to the **original question** at the end of the answer in questions 1 and 4.
- Indicating an **opinion at the end** of each answer, even when uncertain at the beginning.

Strategy # 5 - Be Confident with the Examiner

HERE ARE IMPORTANT ways to act with the examiner.

Be positive

- Enter the exam room with confidence
- Give a warm smile
- Be friendly always

Make eye contact

- Look directly at the interviewer when he/she is speaking
- Look directly at the interviewer when you are speaking

Use body language

- Sit facing the examiner
- Keep your hands still and do not fidget
- Keep your hair out of your face
- Keep your head straight, as opposed to tilted on one side
- Lean slightly forward, showing you are engaged in the discussion and not distant

Focus on grooming / presentation

- Wear clean clothes and shoes which look smart
- Wear deodorant to avoid body odour
- Have clean teeth and fresh breath

Mirror the movements of the examiner

- Notice the way the examiner is sitting and speaking

- Try to match the communication style of the examiner so you mirror what he/she believes is good practice

The following points shows what to **avoid** when interacting with the examiner.

Do not touch the examiner

- Do not attempt to touch the examiner at any point
- Do not shake the examiner's hand

Do not get too close

- The examiner will expect you to keep your distance throughout the exam.
- There is no reason for you to get within 30cm of the examiner.

Praise the examiner's clothes/appearance

- The examiner will think that you are trying to influence the score in an unfair way if you say nice things about his/her clothes or appearance so avoid this completely

Do not be too pushy

- The examiner is running the exam so wait for him/her to move on to the next sections

Do not be overly friendly

- You don't know the examiner so do not be overly friendly
- Do not welcome the examiner to your country

Dress inappropriately

- You should wear good quality clothes
- Do not show too much skin or try to impress the examiner with your physical appearance

Strategy # 6 - Understand the Scoring System

THE SPEAKING PART OF the exam is the only time you will be **face-to-face** with an examiner. This provides you with an excellent opportunity to use your **personality** to sell yourself as a skilled communicator.

You must keep in mind that the expected ways of interacting with the examiner follow the general rules of western culture in a formal setting. Remember, the speaking test is like a **job interview**. It is a **formal occasion** which requires **formal language**.

In terms of the speaking answers you give during the test, you will receive marks for your performance in four areas:

1. **Fluency and coherence**
2. **Lexical resource**
3. **Grammatical range and accuracy**
4. **Pronunciation**

More about each of these are included in the next four strategies.

Strategy # 7 - Fluency and Coherence

FOR **fluency**, the examiner judges how well you can speak at **normal speed** and **without too many stops and pauses**. To score well in this area you must **avoid pausing** and saying ‘**um**’, ‘**er**’, ‘**you know**’.

Compare the following answers to the question:

‘Tell me about a place you have travelled to in the past.’

Candidate 1

Well, um...a few years...a few years ago I went to...a town which is famous in my country. Er...the town is like...you know...like a big place for companies to...um...er...make stuff.

Candidate 2

Two years ago I travelled to a well-known town in my country. While it is a place with natural beauty, it is also known locally as a manufacturing centre.

Obviously, candidate 2 has a far stronger response. Not only is the **vocabulary stronger**, but the **fluency is far superior** to candidate 1. If you cannot speak fluently, you will find it difficult to get a high score on the speaking test. For many candidates, the way they speak in daily life **may not be appropriate** for IELTS.

For **cohesion**, you are judged on how well you can **build your sentences** with words and phrases that make it **easy for the listener to understand** what you are saying (firstly, furthermore, in contrast, therefore).

It is recommended that you use **signposting language** to make it clear for the listener what you are trying to say.

What is signposting language? This is language that helps the listener know what is coming in the rest of the sentence. It is often used for writing essays, but it is equally effective in speaking.

Strategy # 8 - Use the AREC Strategy

AREC is a strategy that allows you to **give a full answer** which is logical and informative. When using this strategy, you can extend your answers for as long as you feel is appropriate, without having to pause with ‘um’ and ‘ah’ as you think of what to say next. Here it is:

A - Answer the question

It sounds simple, but you’d be amazed at how many candidates, particularly when nervous, actually fail to answer the question. Make sure you answer the question directly.

For example, if the examiner asks the question ‘Do you like listening to music?’ you should be specific with your answer, by giving an answer such as:

“Yes, I love listening to music.”

R - Reason for your answer

You should follow up your answer with a reason. To continue the answer about listening to music, you should state the reasons for your answer. You could say:

“I particularly love listening to music because it makes me feel relaxed.”

E – Example

At this stage you can expand your answer with an example that proves your point. Continuing the example about listening to music, you can describe an actual case in which listening to music helped you to feel relaxed. Here you could say:

“For example, one day at university I was very nervous because I had to give a presentation in front of my tutorial group. In fact I was so nervous that I felt I couldn’t think correctly, and I was worried that I wouldn’t be

able to remember anything at all when it came my turn to speak. So on the way to university I chose my favourite music and played it louder than usual on my iPod. By doing this I was able to relax so much that I actually felt confident going into the tutorial room. Then when it was time to talk, I was able to speak with confidence.”

Keep in mind, rather than speak about examples in a general way ‘I used to do ABC..’, you should speak about a concrete example.

C – Contrast

By providing a contrast, you demonstrate that you have strong critical thinking skills by being able to give both sides of an argument. In many cases it may not be necessary to give a contrast, because the answers you give in the ARE sections are enough. However, the contrast is useful if you feel your original answer has not been strong enough:

“On the other hand, sometimes listening to music can be frustrating. For example, sometimes when I listen to music on the radio I get annoyed when a song is played that I don’t like. Or even worse, when a group a songs is interrupted by advertisements that I’m not interested in. In these situations I’d rather switch off and do something else.”

Strategy # 9 - Use Powerful Words

WITH LEXICAL RESOURCE, you show the examiner how **appropriately** and **accurately** you use vocabulary to **give meaning**. Using **synonyms** to show that you know two words with the same meaning also shows you have good lexical resource. For example, if the examiner asks you about a ‘holiday’ you recently had, you could mention the fact you had a ‘vacation’, in order to show that you know the synonyms.

Another way to improve your score in this area is to use **stronger vocabulary**. For example, if the examiner asks you what types of books you read, you could either say:

I like books that are true.

Or

*I prefer to read **non-fiction books**.*

Clearly, the second answer uses better vocabulary, so this sentence will help the candidate get a higher score. Here are a few more examples:

I play computer games.

Or

*I **participate in online computer games between multiple users**.*

I am good at cooking.

Or

*I **have years of experience in the kitchen and have a range of cooking skills**.*

More examples of better vocabulary include:

Weak & Powerful words

fun - entertaining

good - excellent

like - enjoy

start - commence

try - attempt

right- correct

think about - consider

important - valuable

big - major

thing - aspect

idea - concept

Strategy # 10 - Use Native Speaker Phrases

WHEN USED CORRECTLY, the following native speaker phrases will have a significant impact on your score. You do not have to use all of them; however, you should try to become comfortable using them as you practice for the speaking test.

Introducing a topic or sub-topic

- When it comes to I believe that...
- In terms of

When it comes to education, I believe that children should be encouraged to problem solve.

In terms of public transport, I support the use of bus networks in all areas of the city.

Giving strong opinions

- As far as I'm concerned, ...
- If you ask me, ...

As far as I'm concerned, the environment should be the primary focus of government.

If you ask me, the population in rural areas needs to be expanded so the cities stay safe.

Discussing things that you haven't personally done/seen/experienced

- From what I've heard/read/seen on television, ...
- From what others have told me, ...

From what I've seen on television, food production is becoming an even bigger issue.

From what others have told me, the shortage of water in this country is becoming serious.

Introducing choices/guesses

- If I had to choose/guess/predict, I'd say that ...
- If it was a choice between ... and ..., I'd most likely choose ...

If I had to choose, I'd say that travel is the best way to improve your life experience.

If it was a choice between cooking and a restaurant, I'd most likely choose the restaurant.

Saying something that might not be liked by the listener

- To be honest, ...
- I'm afraid ...

To be honest, I'm not sure if someone who does not come from my culture could understand.

I'm afraid I can't agree with you on that.

Talking about 'likes'

- I have a soft spot for ...
- I'm (quite/very) fond of ...
- I'm a big fan of ...
- I'm (really) into ...
- I'm (quite/really) keen on ...
- The idea of ... quite appeals to me.

I have a soft spot for Italian food, especially pasta and pizza.

I'm very fond of animals, particularly rare animals that you can see in the zoo.

I'm a big fan of hip hop music.

I'm really into playing computer games, especially those that have realistic graphics.

I'm quite keen on travelling to places where I've never been before.

The idea of operating my own business quite appeals to me.

Rephrasing your own point

- What I'm trying to say is ...
- To put it another way, ...

What I'm trying to say is that people in my situation can be successful if they work hard.

To put it another way, if it was your best friend who needed help, you might think differently.

Something you can almost think of but not quite

- It's on the tip of my tongue.

Sorry, I can't quite remember the name. It's on the tip of my tongue!

Something you can't quite think of how to explain

- I'm not exactly sure how to put this, but ...
- Probably the best way to explain it is to say

I'm not exactly sure how to put this, but it's related to a religious tradition in my culture.

Probably the best way to explain it is to say look at each situation, then make the judgement.

Bringing a conversation back to the central issue

- What's important (to remember) (here) is that ...

Yes, that's a valid point, but what's important to remember here is that the welfare of the students is vitally important.

Strategy # 11 - Use Signposting Language

SIGNPOSTING LANGUAGE helps to give your language more **structure**.

While signposting language can be used in the speaking section of the test, it is important **not** to use these phrases too much. In fact, if you overuse these phrases, you may sound **unnatural** for normal spoken English.

However, it is recommended to use them occasionally during your speaking. This will help you from repeating simple phrases like ‘also’, ‘but’ and ‘now’, which do not show **lexical range**.

Signposting Language and Examples

n recent years *In recent years, the internet has become more common.*

Nowadays *Nowadays, people use smart phones to communicate.*

These days *These days, information is easy to find on most subjects.*

Firstly *Firstly, I believe the main reason for ... is ...*

Secondly *Secondly, it's clear that ...*

Finally *Finally, I'd say that ...*

Moreover *Moreover, we know that ...*

Furthermore *Furthermore, the evidence suggests ...*

In addition *In addition, it seems that ...*

However *However, most people would also think that ...*

In contrast *In contrast, I think it's important to look at ...*

On the other hand *On the other hand, ... is also worth considering...*

For example *For example, last year...*

For instance *For instance, when I was in Italy...*

Therefore *Therefore, we can clearly see that ...*

As a result *As a result, the school decided to ...*

To sum up *To sum up, I believe that ...*

Overall *Overall, it's true that ...*

Strategy # 12 - Grammatical Range and Accuracy

YOUR SCORE FOR GRAMMATICAL range and accuracy is based on how **accurately** and **appropriately** you use a **range** of grammatical structures including use of **tenses** (present simple, past simple), **subject-verb agreement** (people are) and **word form** (noun, verb adjective).

During the speaking exam, you will need a **combination** of speaking skills. These include **storytelling**, **describing**, **talking about future goals** and **giving opinions** and **insights**.

Therefore, you will certainly need to use a range of different tenses in order to speak with accuracy.

Important point! Some candidates try to speak with very simple English sentences, which are safe and error free. If you do this, you will **lose marks**, because the examiner will think you are **not taking risks**, and therefore you are **not showing a range** of grammar.

The following tenses are most often used in the IELTS speaking exam:

Past simple

Example: “I visited many parts of my country when I was younger”.

Used for: Actions that are completed. The past simple is often used to describe what happened in parts of your life that are completed.

Present simple

Example: “Currently I live with my brother in an apartment close to downtown”.

Used for: Actions that occur every day.

The present simple is often used to describe information, which is true, and for repetitive duties that you perform in your current life.

Present continuous

Example: “This month I’m completing my bachelor’s degree at the University of Western Australia”.

Used for: Projects or actions that are happening at the moment, or around now. These actions have a limited time and are different from daily routine tasks that use present simple tense.

Present perfect

Example: “I’ve met a large number of people from other countries since I’ve been living in London.”

Used for: Actions that have occurred in the past that affect the present. The emphasis is not on when the action occurred, but on how the action impacts or influences the present situation. Note the first example here is present perfect simple, and the second example is present perfect continuous.

Future simple

Example: In five years from now, I will hopefully be in a position to take on some leadership responsibilities in a large company.

Used for: Discussing what you will do in the future. Note that ‘will’ is mostly used for predictions and ‘going to’ is also used for talking about future plans.

Modal verbs

Example: can, could, would, should, may, might, have to, need to, must

In my opinion, people **should** try and complete as much education as they **can** before entering the workforce.

People must change their eating habits if they want to lose weight.

Used for: Opinions, ideas, suggestions, recommendations and possibilities usually use modal verbs. This makes modal verbs very powerful, particularly for speculating and considering opinions, which are generally required in section 3.

Strategy # 13 - Use Different Verb Tenses

USE DIFFERENT VERB tenses for different types of speaking. These include **describing**, **storytelling**, expressing **opinions** and making **comparisons**.

DESCRIBING - USING present simple to state something that is true

My home town has a population of approximately...

It's located near ...

My family is what you would call quite typical in many ways...

My family is quite unusual in many ways...

I have a range of interests, such as..., ... and ...

Describing –using present perfect to show how something has changed over time

It's become well-known for it's ...

It's changed dramatically in recent times, especially due to...

It's been updated recently, to help with...

Storytelling phrases – using past simple to show a completed past

A long time ago, when I was just ... years old ...

A few years ago, I went to ...

In February last year, I noticed that...

When I lived in ...

A friend of mine whose name was ...

Suddenly something quite interesting happened.

You wouldn't believe what happened next.

Twenty years ago, things were different, that was because

Expressing opinions – using modal verbs

Probably the most important aspect to consider would be ...

I believe people should ...

In the future, I think the situation will ...

The situation must change if progress is to be made.

If you compared today with twenty years ago, you would see that ...

If people want change, they usually have to work hard for it.

Making comparisons – using present simple

While ... is important, it's clear that ... is also a critical factor.

Whereas books are traditional, E-books are often more convenient.

When you compare ... with ..., you can see that...

Strategy # 14 - Get Native Speaker Feedback

YOUR SCORE FOR **pronunciation** is based on how easy it is for you to be **understood** when you speak. If the examiner has a difficult time understanding you because of the way you say your words, you will obviously score a lower mark for this area.

The best way to **rapidly improve** your pronunciation is to find out which **words other people** have difficulties in understanding.

Start by speaking with a **native speaker**. Ask the native speaker to make notes as you speak to give clear feedback.

It may be a good idea to ask the native speaker to give you a **practice IELTS speaking** test so your pronunciation problems can be heard in realistic conditions. You might also read a page of a book out loud and then ask for **feedback** on your pronunciation.

Questions to ask the native speaker may include:

- Are there any **words** that you could not understand?
- Are there any **sounds** that were not pronounced correctly?
- Did the speaking use correct **rises and falls in tone**, or was it too **monotone**?
- Was the **speed** of the speaking appropriate?
- Were there any words that sounded **too short** or **too long**?

Obviously, having a native English speaker who is also a professional **language teacher** will help because he or she will be able to point out the exact problems.

However, any native speaker should be able to give you at least a general indication of your **strengths** and **weaknesses** in pronunciation.

Strategy # 15 - Word Stress and Length

AREAS OF PRONUNCIATION that cause problems include:

- **Word stress** - are you stressing (saying loudly) the right syllables (sounds) of a word?
- **Sentence stress** - Are you stressing the correct words in each sentence?
- **Length** - Are you pronouncing the long and short sounds in each word correctly?

In terms of **word stress**, always remember, English is a **stressed** language. This means that some parts of words are stressed loudly and clearly. Word stress in English is when a word with two more syllables has one sound are stressed. For example:

*English, America, **People**, Lifestyle*

Sentence stress is another important aspect of English speaking and listening. The following rules state when you should and shouldn't stress words in a sentence.

Use stress: main verbs (speak), adverbs (clearly), main adjectives (new), main nouns (telephone)

Do not use stress: 'Grammar words', such as auxiliary verbs (is, can), prepositions (in, at, on), determiners (the, some), pronouns, (I, you, they, us), conjunctions (but, while)

For example, the following words in **bold** are stressed (notice the heavy stress on the negative word):

*I like to **meet** my friends after work.*

*I **don't** like to do chores after work.*

In the first example, the sentence is spoken quickly. In the second sentence the stress on 'don't' slows the speed of the sentence.

For word length, some words have **long sounds**, while others have **short sounds**. For example, the word 'China' has a short 'i' sound. In contrast, 'Thailand' has a long 'i' sound.

If you find that people sometimes don't understand you in English, it may be because you are pronouncing words with the wrong **length** of sound.

Strategy # 16 - Improve Sound Pronunciation

PEOPLE WHO LEARN ENGLISH as an additional language may **share the same pronunciation problems** as other people who come from the same first language background. For example, speakers who come from Vietnam may often have problems with joining consonant sounds, because the Vietnamese language has fewer consonant sounds than English.

Therefore, you should research what types of pronunciation mistakes are often made by people who have the same first language as you do. A simple Google search will reveal these common pronunciation and other language problems.

Many candidates have common pronunciation problems with the following sounds, which do not exist in many other languages:

/v/ for ‘very’

/ʒ/ for ‘pleaʒure’

/dʒ/ for ‘bridge’

/θ/ for ‘through’

/ð/ for ‘those’

/r/ for ‘rain’

/l/ for ‘list’

/m/, /n/, and /ŋ/ at the end of words (eg. some / sun / sing)

/b/, /d/, /g/, /p/, /t/ & /k/ at the end of words (eg. tub / dig / jog / tap / bite / kick)

Words that have consonant clusters (two consonant sounds that appear together (eg. /bl/, /gl / /st/, /sp/, /tr/, /cr/)

Strategy # 17 - Know the Flow of the Speaking Test

ID CHECK

My name is John Examiner. What is your full name please?

My full name is Jose Juan Fernandez.

What can I call you?

Please call me by my first name, which is Jose.

Where are you from?

I'm from Madrid, which is in Spain.

Can I see your identification?

Yes, here you are.

Thanks, that's fine. Now I'm going to ask you some questions.

(Note: You do not need to give extended answers during the introduction).

PART 1

Firstly, let's talk about the internet and computers. How often do you use computers?

I use computers most days. This is because I'm a university student and most of my work is done by computer. For example, each day I need to logon to the university website where I can access the lecture notes and resources that the tutor has uploaded. I also use computers to communicate

by email and quite often I use computers for entertainment, such as playing computer games and watching movies. Therefore, I'd say that computers have become a central part of my life.

[The student is using present tense to talk about things that are true and occur regularly.]

Do you like the using the internet? Why or why not?

Yes, I really enjoy using the internet. Mainly due to the fact that it has an incredible amount of information on just about any subject you can think of. In terms of my main interest, which is graphic design, there are thousands of great sites that I can visit to let me know the latest trends in design and information about how I can improve my techniques. With the increased use of social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter, it's clearly much easier to stay connected with my friends and acquaintances, which also makes the internet a fun place to be.

On the other hand, the internet can waste a great amount of valuable time if you are not careful, so I suppose it's important to monitor how often you use it and for what purpose.

[Again, the student is using present simple tense to talk about facts which are true. The answer also follows the same AREC structure as follows: 1. Answer the question 2. Give a reason and 3. Give examples. 4. Give a contrast.]

How did you learn to use a computer?

When I was in primary school we had lessons on how to use computers. Back then computers were still a bit difficult to use, so it took some time to understand some of the functions. In fact, when I was younger I didn't really consider myself to be very strong at using computers at all. However, over time and with more practice by myself I certainly improved my performance. In particular, I developed a strong interest in graphic design software which led to the interests I have now.

Here the student is forced to use past simple tense to discuss past events that are completed.

In your opinion, how should people learn to use computers?

It depends on the people. By that I mean how old they are and what they need to use a computer for. Some people might need to sit next to a computer expert. Other people might need to take a computer class. In general, however, I would say knowing how to search for information on the internet about how to use particular computer programs would be a good way to learn. When it comes to specific problems, the help function on the software programs would provide a good source of information on the particular elements of the program.

In this opinion question the speaker is using the modal verbs ‘might’ and ‘would’. The idiomatic phrase “when it comes to...” is also used correctly and will be noticed by the examiner.

Part 2

Describe a typical day at work, college or school.

You should say:

- **What you do**
- **When you do it**
- **How long you’ve had this routine**

You should also say what you would like to change in your routine.

My typical day at starts at 7am when I wake and prepare to leave the house. I usually drive to university and get there by 9.30am. Each day is a little bit different, depending on the lectures and tutorials I have scheduled.

This semester my busiest days are Tuesday and Thursday, with about six contact hours each day. I usually spend at least one hour in the library or in the computer lab, preparing for the next assessment which is due. I’m always home by 5.30 in the evening and at night I find that I need to spend a few hours studying.

I’ve had this routine for the past seven weeks, and next semester it will probably change again depending on my timetable.

If I could change anything about this routine I would not like to do so much homework at night. This is because I often feel sleepy when I'm supposed to be studying, which is not very productive. The alternative would be to do more study in the mornings before I leave for university. Perhaps I will try this next semester.

[The student has done a good job in answering all four aspects of the question. To answer this well, he has had to use a number of tenses, including present simple (when I wake), present perfect (I've had), modal verbs (if I could, I would) and future simple (I will try).]

Part 3

Let's think about how people consider routines. What are the benefits and drawbacks of having a daily routine?

I believe there are a number of benefits of routines. Firstly, they provide structure to a person's life, which has the advantage of providing consistency in the amount of work done. Secondly, routines help to provide certainty, which many people need when they have bills to pay and deadlines to meet. Finally, routines help people to organise meetings they have with other people. In contrast, the major disadvantage of routines is that they can make people inflexible which may cause problems when people are very busy.

[The candidate uses strong signposting language in this answer, demonstrating a logical approach to answering the question. The candidate also uses synonyms to show his mastery of the language. For example, he uses the word 'disadvantage', which means the same as 'drawback', which was mentioned by the examiner. Once again, the present simple tense is used to speak about facts, and the modal verb 'can' is used to talk about possibility.]

What factors influence most people's daily routines?

Do you think people get enough choice in their routine? Routines are affected in different ways. For example, a student's routine is affected by the study schedule, whereas a worker's routine is affected by the demands of a company. It might be the case that workers have to attend a meeting every

Thursday, and that they have to write a report every Friday. This will affect the routine they keep. Other factors that influence routines might include the make-up of the family and the type of transport used.

Although most people can't control many aspects of their routines, I believe they still have a number of choices that they can make each day if they need to have a fresh approach.

[The candidate shows good grammatical range, by using the passive voice (are affected/is affected) in the first sentence, followed by the active voice (workers have to attend) in the second sentence. Strong vocabulary used includes the words: influence, aspect, approach.]

How do you think routines these days are different from routines in the past? And how do you think routines will change in the future?

In recent years, technology has played a major role in shaping routines. This is due to the fact that we have more flexibility for communicating with other people than we had in the past. In terms of routines, this results in people working from home more often and not having to follow the typical routine of being in the office every day from 9am until 5pm.

In the future, routines may not be as fixed as they are today. Again, because technology continues to improve, people have far greater flexibility in the way they work and communicate, which should result in people not being stuck in the same routine, day after day, and year after year. For some people this will have great benefits, as they may be able to spend more time with their family and friends. However, for others, this may prove to be stressful, as the certainty they had with routines no longer exists.

[Again the candidate has used complex and varied grammatical structures in his answers. The use of vocabulary, including synonyms and sophisticated language is also strong. In the final few lines, the candidate provides a neat summary of the overall subject of routines, which helps to tie the information together nicely.]

Strategy # 18 - Repeat the Question

IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTIES understanding the question, it is okay to ask for the question to be repeated or re-phrased. You might say:

- I'm sorry, can you please repeat the question.
- I didn't quite catch that, can you repeat the question, please.

Another way to check for meaning is to ask the following:

- So what you're saying is ...
- Could you explain/clarify what you mean by ...

Strategy # 19 - Record Yourself

DURING THE REAL IELTS test, your conversation with the examiner is **recorded**. This is to make sure the examiner has given you the correct score in case you decide to make an appeal against the score you are given.

It is a good idea to **practice recording yourself** before the test. Take part of a practice test, or a whole practice test, and record your speaking by using an **MP3 recorder** on your smart phone or computer. Listen and try to **self-correct** the mistakes when you listen to yourself.

You can even **transcribe** (write down the words you say) your speaking to read how you speak. This is a great way to see the grammar and vocabulary you are using.

Always think about **different tenses** (for example: past simple tense for completed events, present continuous for events happening now).

When you listen to yourself, think about your use of:

- Native speaker vocabulary (lexical resource)
- Fluency (no ums and ahhs)
- Use of tenses – past – present – future
- Tone (monotone or varied?)
- Speed of your voice
- Correct pronunciation of sounds (th / l / r)

In addition, when you listen to the recording, **ask yourself** the following questions:

- Did you answer the question?
- Did you extend your answer or was it too short?
- Did you give any contrasts (opposite information)?
- Did you use formal vocabulary?

If you don't like what you hear, do more practice and then record yourself again. You will find the simple act of recording yourself places you under **more pressure** to perform, more so than if you speak to yourself without a recorder.

Strategy # 20 - Use English Every Day

SPEAK as much as possible as you prepare for the exam. Practice speaking about the types of **topics** found on the IELTS speaking exam and practice speaking for **long periods of time**. Speak to other IELTS students via the internet or via appointment. Practice speaking about yourself and practice giving opinions.

Remember, a big part of IELTS speaking is **describing, telling stories and giving opinions**. Therefore, when you speak with people, practice your skills in describing, telling stories and giving opinions. Speaking this way will prepare your mind for the speaking test.

Phrases to start a conversation with an English speaker:

There are people in every country that speak English. Make an effort to practice speaking with another person. They can be a native speaker, or anyone with an interest in improving their English.

If you'd like to start speaking with another person, simply ask one of these questions:

- *Hi, can I please speak English with you?*
- *Hi there, I'd like to practice speaking English with you. Is that okay?*
- *Is it okay if we speak in English? I have an important test coming up soon so I'd like to practice as much as possible.*

More Information

YOU HAVE REACHED THE end of this book. We thank you for taking the time to read it and we wish you the best of luck for your IELTS test.

For more information about IELTS and English language training, please visit: <https://www.englishtec.com/>

Don't miss out!

Click the button below and you can sign up to receive emails whenever Matt McGinniss publishes a new book. There's no charge and no obligation.

[Sign Me Up!](#)

<https://books2read.com/r/B-A-GKBN-UBCLB>

BOOKS  READ

Connecting independent readers to independent writers.