

Some Do's and Don'ts for your IELTS test

LISTENING

1. Don't just glance at instructions; read them carefully. They can vary considerably.
2. It often happens that the speaker will give you an answer and then correct what s/he has said - watch out for this ploy.
3. Try to anticipate what the speaker will say. This requires concentration - easy in your own language, but more difficult in English!
4. Although there are not that many IELTS books on the market, other Cambridge exam preparation materials can provide valuable practice; for example, FCE and CAE preparation books.
5. Small errors can lead to a low score: spelling mistakes, omitting plural 's' or incomplete time indications.
6. Don't panic if you think the topic is too difficult or the speaker is too fast. Take a deep breath, relax and tune in.
7. Read, write and listen at the same time. Tricky, but worth practicing!
8. Don't leave blanks - you will not be penalised for wrong answers so you might as well guess!

READING

1. Leave a question for later if you can't answer. Spending a long time on one answer is not ideal. Go back later if you have time and guess if you have to.
2. Don't panic if you don't know anything about the subject of the passage. All the answers can be found in the passage and you don't need any specialist knowledge.
3. Remember, unlike the Listening section of the exam, you have no extra time to transfer your answers at the end of the Reading section.
4. As a preparation for the exam, read as widely as possible e.g. newspapers, magazines, or journals. Don't limit yourself to one type of text and read articles with an academic style if possible.
5. Look at the way paragraphs are organised.
6. Try to predict the content of a paragraph from the opening sentence.
7. Give a paragraph you read an imaginary heading.
8. Don't concentrate on words you don't know. It only wastes valuable time.
9. Careless mistakes cost points. Copy the answer correctly if it is mentioned in the passage.
10. Check your spelling, and make sure to put in singular or plural as required.
11. Only give one answer unless explicitly stated otherwise.

WRITING

1. Highlight or circle key words.
2. Clearly divide paragraphs.
3. Don't repeat ideas using different words.
4. Stick to the topic.
5. Be careful with timing ! Don't rush Task 2, it's longer and carries more weight.
6. Put one idea in each paragraph.
7. Avoid informal language.
8. Learn to recognise how long 150/250 words is in your handwriting. You don't really have time to count.
9. Get used to spending several minutes re-reading and correcting your essays.
10. Don't memorise model answers, they won't fit the question and you will make more careless mistakes. In addition, examiners are trained to recognise them so your exam will be invalid.

SPEAKING

1. We want to test your ability to communicate effectively, and not just your grammatical accuracy.
2. Don't learn chunks of answers. The examiner is trained to spot this and will change the question.
3. Develop your answers as much as possible.
4. Speak more than the examiner.
5. Ask for clarification if necessary.
6. Remember, this is not a test of your knowledge but of your language abilities. It is not a case of one answer being the correct one and all others being wrong. Try to express your opinion.

The areas covered are fairly predictable and not infinite; practice at home by recording your ideas onto tape.