

**How To Get IELTS Score
That Opens Doors For You**

Ace The IELTS



By Simone Braverman

Ace The IELTS
Essential tips for IELTS General Training Module
© September 2005 By Simone Braverman

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From Author

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Table of Contents

What this book is about	4
Attitude tips	4
How to use this book.....	5
The IELTS Routine	6
Listening at a glance	6
Reading at a glance	7
Writing at a glance	7
Speaking at a glance	8
Tips for the Listening Test	9
In general	9
Instructions will keep you safe	10
Divide and conquer!	10
Distractions	11
Listen for specifics	11
Answer as you listen	11
Keep moving forward	11
Know your clues	12
Spelling tasks	12
Typical Listening tasks	13
Eliminate	14
Gap-fill strategy	14
Watch out for traps	15
Check the grammar	15
Use your time wisely	15
Copy answers smartly	16
Answering Sheet looks like this:	17
Practice, practice, practice!	17
Tips for the Reading Test.....	18
Test structure	18
Manage your own time	18
Don't read – scan!	18
Make a map	19
Learn the rules	19
Types of tasks	20
Go fishing!	21
Choose your battles.....	21
Use passage layout.....	21
Find the keywords.....	21
Strategy for the Matching task.....	22
Strategy for True/False/Not Given task.....	22
Strategy for Multiple-choice task	22
Strategy for the Gap fills.....	23
Assumptions are the mother of all mess-ups!	24
Practice, practice, practice!	24
Tips for the Writing test.....	25

Essential tips for IELTS General Training Module

First, some general guidelines	25
Tips for Writing Task 1 - Letter	26
Types of letters	26
Complaint	26
Useful phrases.....	28
Example of Complaint	29
Request of information letter	30
Example of Request letter.....	31
Job application letter.....	32
Example of Job Application	33
Personal Letter	34
Example of Personal Letter	34
Formal Business letter	35
Example of Formal Business letter	36
Do it right!	37
Practice, practice, practice!	38
Complaint letters tasks.....	38
Request of Information letter tasks.....	39
Job Application letter task	40
Personal letters tasks.....	40
Business Letter tasks.....	41
Tips for Writing Task 2 - Essay.....	42
Structure of essay.....	42
Essay topics – 3 different kinds	42
Essay of A(rgument) kind.....	42
Essay of H(idden Argument) kind	43
Essay of S(ituation) kind	43
General suggestions	44
Baby Steps through essay	44
40 minutes? Not enough!.....	47
Helpful phrases	47
Practice, practice, practice!	49
Tips for the Speaking test.....	51
Keep it simple!.....	51
Interview	52
Possible questions and answers	52
Speech.....	54
Practice, practice, practice	55
Discussion.....	56
Have an opinion!.....	57
What if ...?	60
Leave a good impression	60
Pocket tips.....	61
Essay:.....	62
Study Plan.....	63

What this book is about

This guide is here to teach you the IELTS test, not the English language. Why? Because even if English is your main language – forget about getting a good score in IELTS, unless you are prepared for it. Two main problems will get in your way: *time, tricks and logical traps*.

When it comes to IELTS, **time is your worst enemy**. You need to do things fast. Of course you would get all the answers right if you had the time. But the reality is that there are a lot questions to be answered, a lot of writing to be done, and a very little time to do it.

This guide teaches you **HOW TO**:

- Listen, hear the right answers and write them down FAST
- Scan through the text and deal with all kinds of questions FAST
- Get your essay written FAST
- Build a speech in your head on any topic FAST
- Know and avoid the traps when you see them

This book might not give you the perfect English, but it sure will help you to get in shape and ACE the IELTS!

Attitude tips

In my opinion (which was validated by IELTS scores of the people I trained) you don't need more than 4 weeks of daily training. Set aside 3 hours that you devote to practice for IELTS – and it will get you the desired result.

I believe that if you can read and understand this e-book, your English is good enough. Just stick to the guidelines of this book and they will help you get the best IELTS score you can with your current level of English. You can even give yourself a *day off* once a week, and still be able to ACE the IELTS!

How to use this book

The way this manual is built makes it possible for you to read main chapters (Listening, Reading, Writing or Speaking tips) in **any** order you like, there is no dependency between them. You don't have to follow the order in which the book is written.

If you don't have much time, I suggest reading this book and doing only the exercises that are included in it, no extra work. This is not the ideal way, though.

In case you do have the time, I highly recommend that you read and pay attention to all the tips in this manual and then try to use them in practice on real IELTS tests. There are links to IELTS materials in the end of every main chapter and a detailed study plan in the end of the book.

In the end of the book there are Pocket tips – short summary of most important hints for all the chapters - Listening, Reading, Writing or Speaking. Read them every time before you start practicing – they will refresh your memory and focus you on what's really important.

Enjoy!

The IELTS Routine

The IELTS test consists of four parts in the following order:

Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.

Listening takes about 30 minutes - 20 minutes to listen to a tape and to answer questions on what you hear, and 10 minutes to transfer your answers to Answer Sheet.

Reading takes 1 hour and your task is to read passages of text and answer questions according to what you have read. There are also other types of assignments which I will cover later on.

Writing takes also 1 hour and is divided into 2 sub-parts: 20 minutes to write a letter and 40 minutes to write an essay.

Speaking takes up to 15 minutes and consists of 3 parts: Personal Interview, Little Speech and a Discussion.

All the parts continue one after another, and only before Speaking you get a little break.

Listening at a glance

Listening consists of 4 sections. There are about 38-40 questions in total. You need to answer all the questions as you listen to the tape. Tape is not paused at any time and you hear it only once. The questions get more difficult as you progress through the test.

Are you scared yet? Don't be! There is a technique to get you through it. A huge relief is that spelling is not important in Listening, except for the words they spell for you on the tape. Just make sure that your answers are readable and understandable, when you copy them to the Answering Sheet. You may write in pencil **only**.

Reading at a glance

Reading consists of 4 text passages and about 40 questions in total. Your job is to read the passages and either answer questions, label diagrams, complete sentences or fill gaps. For every type of task there are instructions and example. Passages are taken from books, newspapers, magazines and the topics are very diverse, from scuba diving to space exploration. Passages progress in difficulty, with first being the easiest and fourth the hardest.

Good news is that you don't really have to read the whole passage, thanks to technique I will refer to later. Not so good news is that there is no additional time to copy your answers to Answering Sheet and you need to squeeze it in the 60 minutes that you have. Please, don't forget to do it – I witnessed someone who did, and it was not a pretty sight. Poor guy was crying, he received score 0 for the **whole** Reading test. Here too you may write in pencil only, no pens are allowed.

Writing at a glance

Writing has 2 sub-tasks. First one is to write a letter according to scenario you receive, using about 150 words. The second task is to write an Essay on given topic, present and justify opinion or give solution to a problem, using not less than 250 words.

Nothing to worry here! Once you'll start using a certain structure which I'll explain later on for the letter and the essay in addition to your imagination, it is a piece of cake. This task requires a bit of training, but after you write a few essays and letters you will be well-prepared for it and you will feel **confident**.

Speaking at a glance

This is the fun part of the test, for many reasons. You get to rest before it, you are a little tired from previous 3 parts and therefore more relaxed. The examiners are trained to smile no matter what, so you feel as if you were speaking to your best friend.

First sub-part of Speaking test is an interview, which means that the examiner asks you questions about yourself, your work, studies, parents, brothers/sisters, pets, etc. This is an easy task to prepare for.

In the second sub-part of Speaking test you receive a card with 3-4 questions. After one minute, that you have to think about something to say, you should give a little speech for one to two minutes, which answers those questions. In the end the examiner might ask you a couple of additional questions.

In the third sub-part of the test you have a discussion with examiner. The topic is somehow related to the one from section two, but it is about more abstract ideas. You have to express and justify an opinion.

The examiner will record your session on tape. Don't worry about it; the tape is to test the examiner and not you.

Tips for the Listening Test

In general

The Listening Test is probably the one people get most scared of. To help yourself overcome that fear, start watching TV programs in English. It is better than radio or audio books, because you also see images that help you understand the words you hear.

Listening – a skill, not a gift!

From my experience, in many cases Listening is the least developed skill. So if you feel especially weak in that area - pay attention to the following tips, that will help you improve your Listening ability. Remember – nobody is born with it, it's just a skill and you learn it. If you think your Listening needs no improvements – skip the “Teach yourself the words” part, move forward to the next tips.

Teach yourself the words

The only way to improve your Listening ability is to train your “ears” to separate and understand the words you hear in the flow of sentence. Often what you hear is a “Blablablabla”, which you can't break into words, and for that reason it makes no sense to you. When training, take a recording of the news, lecture, television program movie or an actual IELTS Listening test and work with it. I suggest using MP3 player. You can easily record English from the radio or any other source to it. It is also easy to repeat (re-play) sentences you didn't understand. MP3 player is small and light, so you can use it in any spare moment that you have – riding the bus or tram, walking the dog, taking a walk yourself, etc.

First, listen, remember what you heard and stop the recording after each phrase. Even if you didn't understand the phrase, play it in your head a couple of times, like a broken record – “Tonight we have a special guest”, “Tonight we have a special guest”, “Tonight we have a special guest”.

Then say it out loud. If you understood that phrase at first, this exercise will improve your pronunciation. If you didn't understand the phrase for the first time, this repetition will give you more time to hear it better, break it into words and make sense out of them. And if it is still difficult, you can always rewind and hear the phrase again.

There is a big difference between **seeing** a word printed on paper while reading and **hearing** it. If you saw a word, it doesn't mean you will recognize it when you hear it. **So every word you have seen, you must hear at list once.**

Instructions will keep you safe

Every task in IELTS Listening test has its instructions. It may sound stupid, but you really need to read them carefully. Why? Because they will tell you exactly what to do with the information: how many words you can use to answer, is there a table you must fill, is there a list to choose words from, how many items you must name, etc. And if the answer must be in 3 words – write EXACTLY 3 WORDS, because writing four or two words will get you 0 score.

To make my point crystal clear, let's take the following scenario for example:

The speaker on a tape says:

“Well, if you are dieting, try to avoid fruits with lots of fructose like watermelon, mango, peaches or grapes.”

The question in the booklet is:

“Name 2 fruits a person on a diet should not eat”.

The answer may be “watermelon, mango” or “mango, peaches” or any combination of **two** items, but **never three or four!!!** Anyone who writes “just in case” – watermelon, mango, peaches, grapes – receives 0 score for that question.

Note: when counting words – “a” or “the” counts as a word.

Divide and conquer!

The recording divides questions into **groups**, so every time you are instructed to answer a group of 4-5 questions. There are 20-30 seconds of silence before each group.

First thing you should do when the tape starts playing, is understand which group of questions you need to answer.

For example the tape says: “Look at questions one to four”. It means that you have about 20 seconds to look at those questions. Go over questions, read them and underline keywords. Keywords are words that contain the main idea of the question. They will help you guess what you will hear – numbers, opening hours, names, locations, etc.

Draw a line under question four, so you won't look further before it's time.

Then you will hear a piece of passage and answer the questions one to four **as you listen**. It means that you should be able to write one answer and listen to another.

After that, the tape will say the numbers of questions in the next group. Repeat the same process, including drawing the line. This dividing technique is very efficient because every time you concentrate on **limited** number of questions, so it makes you more focused and in control.

Distractions

Don't get confused by all the different voices you are going to hear. The recording uses several different voices – of younger and older people, men and women. You may also hear different accents - Australian, British, American, Japanese, etc. The background noise is also varies. It can be of airport, cafe-shop, street, University lecture hall, you name it. Be ready for it and don't let it distract you – because that is exactly what they want. Ignore the noises and listen for the answers.

Listen for specifics

When you are listening, look for descriptions and details, such as dates, places, telephone numbers, opening hours, years (1995), transportation (car, bike, train). If you hear them, but don't know where to place them yet – write them on margins of the Listening booklet. Later you will have some time to check your answers. Going over the questions that you couldn't answer during the Listening passage, you might see that what you've written on the margins fits.

Answer as you listen

The reason you have to “answer as you listen” is that you immediately forget the sentences after you have heard them – because of stress, foreign language, constant flow of information, etc. After hearing the third sentence you won't be able to repeat the first. It means that when any part of Listening is over – you won't be able to remember any of the answers. So write them as you hear them, leave nothing for later.

Keep moving forward

A worst case scenario is you “loosing the sequence of answers” – so you miss one answer and then you miss another one and so on. To prevent that from happening, always look one or two questions ahead. It sounds confusing, but after a little practice becomes very natural and helps a lot. Even if you have missed the answer to a question – **admit it** and move to the next one, otherwise you will loose it too.

Know your clues

The answer is usually pronounced **louder and clearer**, it is easier to hear and understand. If you can't hear something clear (because the speaker swallows words or whispers), then probably the answer is not there. With some practice you will be able to tell the difference.

A good clue to answer is when you hear a repetition of a word, a word being **spelled** out (G A R F U N K E L) or a number **dictated**.

Spelling tasks

As simple as it sounds, the spelling task is not so easy. You should practice a little to be prepared for it. Just ask someone to spell the names of cities from the following list for you. If you study alone, you could record yourself spell those names and numbers, and then play it. The same goes for the list of telephone numbers I include here. It is a good practice and will only add to your confidence. Note: in numbers "00" sometimes is read as "double o" instead of "zero-zero".

<u>Cities</u>	<u>Numbers</u>
Antananarivo	423-5207-0074
Brazzaville	628-2087-2311
Conakry	5167-832-0155
Gaborone	8746-221-0302
Johannesburg	5337-298-0132
Kinshasa	5900-231-7621
Libreville	4348-663-980
Lilongwe	11-267-55410
Mogadiscio	101-9020-7624
Ouagadougou	413-2567-9011
Windhoek	782-6721-0412
Islamabad	479-2001-6792
Rangoon	821-6283-1382
Ascension	492-5241-8921
Vancouver	941-2042-9142
Al Minuya	871-5466-0098
Qandahar	917-5422-3333
Jharkhand	244-1449-2100

Typical Listening tasks

Remember my promise – no surprises in IELTS? The following table shows you every type of task you may see in the Listening test booklet. Different task types come with different instructions, so if you see and remember them now, it will save you time later.

Of course, you won't get every type I show here in your test and the table looks a bit boring. Anyway, my advice is to get to know them **now**.

Don't let them catch you off-guard!

Task Type	What do you do	Instructions in the booklet
Picking pictures	From 3-4 pictures choose a picture that best describes what you hear on tape	Circle the appropriate letter
Multiple choice questions	There is a question and a number of answers (three, four or five), your job is to pick the right one (sometimes more than just one).	Circle the appropriate letter /Circle the correct answer
Short-answer question	Answer in 3 words, as the instructions say	Complete the notes/table. Use NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS for each answer
Sentence completion	Complete a sentence according to what you hear	Complete the notes/table. Use NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS for each answer
Form completion	A form is given and you need to fill in blank fields	Complete the form. Write NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS for each answer
Chart/Table completion	A table with some blank cells is given; your job is to fill them according to the passage you hear.	Complete the notes/table. Use NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS for each answer
True/False/Not Given task	A statement, which is either True, False or Not Given in the passage, you need to decide according to what you hear	Complete the notes/table. Use NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS for each answer
Gap-fill	There are several sentences with missing words, you should pick the correct word and fill it in the gap. Choose from the list (if there is one), or from what you have heard.	Complete the notes below by writing NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS in the spaces provided
Diagram labeling	Write description in 1 to 3 words for different parts of a drawing according to what you hear	Complete/label the diagram by writing NO MORE THAN 3 WORDS in the boxes/spaces provided

Eliminate

When you deal with multiple-choice questions, elimination is a good strategy.

Usually only one answer is correct, unless instructions say something else.

This task is similar to True/False/Not Given. You should decide for **every** choice of answer - is it True, False or Not Given in the passage. After you have decided, choose the one that is True – this is the correct answer. Any other choice, False or Not Given, is incorrect.

Keep in mind that there are cases when all the choices are correct or none of them is correct. Read the instruction carefully and you will know what to do in such cases.

Gap-fill strategy

Look at the words around the gap to understand what's missing, a noun (like boy, toy, truck), an adjective (little, pretty, shiny) or a verb (stands, looks, moves).

For instance, if you see **Noun** before the blank ("The boy is ___"), it means that it's **Adjective** ("The boy is small") or it's **Verb** ("The boy is smiling") is missing.

Once you have picked a word, write it above the gap and then read the whole sentence to be sure that it makes sense.

"Chameleon" questions

They might use different words with the same meaning to confuse you. It could be expressions or synonyms.

For example, the tape says "All the candidates **have to** fill an application form" and the question says "The candidates **must** fill an application" – is it True, False or Not Given? The correct answer is True because "**have to**" means "**must**".

Watch out for traps

Trap Number One – unexpected turn

You might hear speaker starting to say one thing and then, suddenly, continuing to something completely different. This is a trap, so make sure you don't fall for it. The rule here is "Last word counts". For example, if the speaker says "I want to visit that gallery on Monday. No, wait, I've just remembered that it is closed on Monday, so I will go on Wednesday.", and the question is "when" – the correct answer here is Wednesday, and Monday is a trap.

Trap Number Two – generalizations

You might hear speaker first gives a list of things and then says them **all in one word**. For example: "Well, I like to swim, hike, and camp – to be involved in outdoor activities." If the question is "What kind of activities..." the correct answer is "outdoor" and not "swimming", "hiking" or "camping".

Trap Number Three – explicit answer choices

Explicit answers choices can be (and mostly will be) traps. The following example demonstrates what I mean:

The tape says: "This course is a must for all first year students, excluding foreign students".

The Question is "**All** the first year students have to take this course",

The Answer should be **F**(alse), because there is an exception – foreign students.

All the explicit answers that mean "no exceptions" are suspicious to us and call for more attention.

Check the grammar

If the answer you give is grammatically incorrect – it can not be the right one. Checking the grammar of your answers will give you an idea whether your answer correct or not, especially in tasks like:

- Gap-fill
- Sentence completion

Use your time wisely

During the test, you have a little time between passages. Use it to check and complete your answers

Copy answers smartly

After 20 minutes of Listening test, there are 10 additional minutes. During the test you have written all of the answers in the Listening test booklet. These 10 minutes are given you to copy your answers to the Answering sheet, and you should use them **smartly**.

The Answer Sheet has 2 sides, one for Reading test and one for Listening test, so make sure you are writing on the Listening side. I include here an example of Answering Sheet so you could get familiar with it and use it for practicing. First, copy all the answers from the booklet to the Answering Sheet, and pay attention to the following guidelines (as simple as they sound – they are BIG time savers):

- For multiple-choice questions and picking pictures - just copy the letter of correct answer, don't circle it.
- For sentence completion – just copy your answer, not the whole sentence.
- For True/False/Not given question – just copy T, F or NG, whatever your choice is.
- For gap-fills – just copy the word you have chosen for the gap.
- For answers written in short (like prof. advise) – write the full version (professional advise).
- Check that all the answers are clear and understandable.

Now, if you missed some questions – it is a good time to guess.

Answering Sheet looks like this:

1		22	
2		23	
3		24	
4		25	
5		26	
6		27	
7		28	
8		29	
9		30	
10		31	
11		32	
12		33	
13		34	
14		35	
15		36	
16		37	
17		38	
18		39	
19		40	
20		41	
21		42	

For those of you who wonder why all the answers have to consist of **maximum 3 words** – here is the answer: there is not enough space on the Answer Sheet for anything longer than that!

Practice, practice, practice!

I strongly recommend that you use all the tips while practicing. In order to practice you are going to need samples of Listening test, which can be found on the following internet sites (good quality, free of charge):

<http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/IELTS/> - take it online, or print the booklet

<http://www.esl-lab.com/> - for this one you will need Real Audio Player

<http://www.international.holmesglen.vic.edu.au> - download the sample, print booklet

http://esl.about.com/cs/toefl/a/a_ielts_2.htm

Play the Listening samples and start using the tips while searching for answers. This is the only way to really understand how these tips work. You may have to play the same Listening file more than once, to practice in different techniques.

Tips for the Reading Test

Test structure

The structure of Academic and General Training Reading tests is different. Academic Reading on most cases consists of 3 large texts from newspapers or magazines. In General Training there are **several** smaller passages that are taken from advertisements, official documents, booklets, manuals and 2 or 3 larger texts taken from books, magazines or newspapers.

Like in the Listening test, questions in the Reading test are given in groups. Instructions will tell you which group of questions belongs to which paragraph or portion of text. You may see the questions **before** or **after** the passage they belong to.

Manage your own time

As I said before, time is your greatest enemy. In the Listening test it was managed **for you**, but not in the Reading test. So manage it very carefully yourself. When you receive the Reading booklet, first of all count how many passages are there. Let's say there are 4 passages in the booklet. It means that you have 15 minutes for each passage. Write the time when you should start and when you should end working on each passage and stick to it. Use 13 minutes to actually answer the questions (write the answers on the booklet pages) and 2 to copy your answers to the Answer Sheet. If you didn't finish a passage on time, move to the next one anyway. And whatever you do, please do not forget about the Answering Sheet (remember the guy with the ZERO score?)

If you have some time left in the end of Reading test, make sure that you didn't forget to answer any question, check and double check your answers. It can add you a few "easy" points if you find mistakes before the examiner does ☺.

Don't read – scan!

It sounds absurd that you don't need to read on a Reading test, right? Anyway, it's true. The biggest mistake you could make is to start the test by reading the whole passage. The best thing is to scan quickly through the text. Don't try to understand every word! Just go over it and get the idea of what each paragraph is about. Usually you don't need to read the whole paragraph – a couple of first sentences are enough.

Make a map

The text before you is like a new strange territory, it is easy to get lost inside all these words. What you need is a map that will help you to orientate. Every paragraph in the passage has its own main idea, different from all other paragraphs. Write on the margins near the paragraph what is its topic, main idea. If writing takes too much time, underline the words in the paragraph that explain its main idea. Congratulations! You have just created a map that later will guide you through the search for answers.

Learn the rules

First, read instruction and example. They show you exactly how your answer should look like – is it a number or a name, how many words you must write, etc. The following points are important because they may affect your score.

1. Style

When filling the answers, **copy example's style**. For demonstration look at the following table:

	USA	Canada	Sweden
Divorces rate	Example 1: 55%		
Marriage	Example 2: first		

Example 1

If the example says “55%”, give your answer in this exact form, a number and %. Any other form or style (like “55” or “55 percent” or “fifty five percent”) may harm your score!

Example 2

If the example says “first”, answering in any other form or style (like “1st”, “1” or “first marriage”) may harm your score.

2. Words Limit

Usually if there is a word limit for answer, it is no more than 3 words. Prepositions (in, of, to, at, etc) and articles (a, an, the) do count for a word. The reason behind this 3 word limit is small space on the Answer Sheet.

3. One question – one answer

Don't give more than one answer to one question, even if you see more than one option. It will result in ZERO score. For example, if you see in a passage names of 3 countries that qualify as an answer and the question asks to name just one – don't even think of giving 2 or 3 names, the only correct answer is to name exactly one. Only if they ask for two names, you should name two, etc.

Types of tasks

The kinds of tasks you may have to deal with are in the table below. Tasks of different types come with different instructions. It is important for you to see them all now, so nothing will surprise you during your IELTS test. It will also save your time, if you will know **in advance** what you need to do in every type of task. This way during the test you will only read the instructions to **confirm** what you already know.

Task Type	What do you do	Instructions in the booklet
Matching	There is a list of headings, your job is to choose most suitable heading for every paragraph of the text.	Choose the most suitable heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below.
Multiple choice question	There is a question and a number of answers (three, four or five), your job is to pick the right one (sometimes more than just one).	Choose the appropriate letter.
Short-answer question	Answer in 3 words, as the instructions say	Using NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS answer the following questions.
Sentence completion	Complete a sentence according to what you hear	Complete the sentences below with words taken from the reading passage. Use NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS for each answer.
Chart/Table completion	A table with some blank cells is given; your job is to fill them according to the passage you hear.	Complete the table/chart below using information from the Reading Passage. Use NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS for each answer.
True/False/Not Given task	There is a statement, which can be True, False or Not Given in the passage; you need to decide according to what you read.	Read the passage and look at the statements below. Write TRUE if the statement is true, FALSE if the statement is false and Not Given if the information is not given in the passage.
Gap-fill	There are several sentences with missing words, you should pick the correct word and fill it in the gap. Choose from the list (if there is one), or from the text.	Complete the summary below. (Choose your answers from the box at the bottom of the page)
Diagram labeling	Write description in 1 to 3 words for different parts of a drawing according to what you read.	Label the diagram below. Choose Use NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS from passage for each answer.

Go fishing!

Now it is time to start “fishing” for answers. Read question one-by-one, for every question see what its theme is. Then find it (or some thing close to it) on your map - that is the paragraph to search for the answer.

Choose your battles

If any question takes you too much time – give up, move to the next one. Don't forget to mark it with some sign (like "?"), so you could identify and come back to it later. There are a lot of questions and you might miss the easy ones if the hard ones take all of your time. Another reason to leave hard questions for last is that after you do all the easy ones, you know more about the text, so then solving the tricky questions might become easier.

Use passage layout

Every text and every paragraph in it has a certain structure, meaning it is written according to some rules.

Usually first paragraph contains the main idea of the passage and the author's opinion. Last paragraph often summarizes the main points of the passage.

Every paragraph has its structure that is similar to the structure of whole text. It has introduction, body and conclusion. The main idea is usually can be found in the introduction. It means that if you want to understand quickly what paragraph is about, it is enough to read only its introduction.

Find the keywords

Keywords are the main words in the question; they contain the most important information. For instance, in a question like “Employers are likely to employ graduates, who...” there are 3 keywords: employers, employ and graduates.

Identify keywords in each question and look for them in the text – the answer will be near. Don't stop after finding just one, continue to scan through the text – there might be more.

Strategy for the Matching task

First, read instructions and example. If instructions say that a heading **can not** be used more than once – cross the heading used in example out of the list. This way you won't try to use it again by mistake (and believe me, it's a very common mistake!).

Second, return to the map you prepared. Go over the text, look on your map what it says about the idea of first paragraph. Go to the list of headings and choose heading that has the most similar meaning to idea on your map, write its number on the margins of the first paragraph. Now continue and do the same for the second paragraph, and so on.

If some paragraphs are hard to match – leave them alone, keep moving forward. Come back to them later.

When finished matching - check your answers carefully, because they can influence each other. Don't forget to copy answers to the Answer Sheet.

Strategy for True/False/Not Given task

To simplify it for you, if the statement **clearly** appears in text - it is True. If the text clearly says the **opposite** of statement – it is False, if you didn't find statement to be either TRUE or FALSE – it is Not Given.

The best advice here is not to over think it. Otherwise what happen is that you start building logical sequences that take you to the wrong direction.

Strategy for Multiple-choice task

Here too True/False/Not Given technique is a big help. The difference is that you need to use it on each answer choice. For every possible answer you need to decide, if it is True, False or Not Given in the text. Finally, answers you have marked as False or Not Given are incorrect, and the ones you marked as True are correct.

Remember: it is True only when passage says exactly the **same** thing, it is False when passage says exactly the **opposite** and it is Not Given in any other case.

Keep in mind that there are cases when all the choices are correct or none of them is correct. Read the instruction carefully and you will know what to do in such cases.

Strategy for the Gap fills

First of all try to understand what the main idea of the first sentence is. Then find it on your map – this should take you to the paragraph that "hides" the answer.

Now, when you know **where** to look, you need to know **what** to look for. Look around the gap to understand what's missing, a noun (like boy, toy, truck), an adjective (little, pretty, shiny) or a verb (stands, looks, moves).

For example, what is missing here: "She ____ around and saw him in the corner"?

You have 4 choices: happy, man, looked, smiled. It is clear that you need a verb here, but which one, "looked" or "smiled"? Now it is time to start reading the text.

Find where example answer is and start there. Remember to read only first, second and last sentence. Of course, "looked" is the right word!

Sometimes there are words near gap that will give you a clue what kind of word is missing. For example, "Main physical activities in the summer camp are fishing, _____ and swimming. Naturally, you will look for words that end with "ing" to fill for the gap – like "hiking".

There are 2 types of gap-fills:

- 1) There is a **list** of words for you to choose from
- 2) There is **no list**, you need to choose words from text

When you choose a word from the list and the instructions say that every word is to be used **once** only, write it above the gap and cross it out from the list. If there is more than one possible answer – write them all and then decide which one is better.

If they don't give you a list, try to pick a word from text. It is better then "inventing" it, because it saves time and your chances of being right are higher.

After you have decided about the word that goes into gap, read the whole sentence again. It must make sense according to the text, and it must be grammatically correct.

When you move forward to the second gap, keep in mind that usually there are no more than 2 gaps per paragraph. It means that if you have found answer to the first gap in paragraph 1, the answer to the second gap will be in the paragraph 2 and so on.

Assumptions are the mother of all mess-ups!

Don't assume you know the answer, search for it in the passage. When answering the questions, you must stick to the facts as they are written in the paragraph. Forget all about your personal knowledge and experience! Relying on your own knowledge is the most natural thing for you, so sometimes they use it in IELTS to trick you into making a choice of answer according to what you know or believe and not according to the passage.

Practice, practice, practice!

Reading the text in the way I described in this chapter must become your second nature. The only way to make it happen is to practice in using my tips while doing the Reading test.

When practicing, finish the reading test and then check your answers according to answer key. Pay attention to those you've got **wrong**, not those you've got right – understand why didn't you do them right and try to remember, so that mistake won't come back.

Practice with a clock and copy your answers to the Answer Sheet. You may use the one from the chapter on Listening test; it is similar to Reading test Answer Sheet.

In order to practice, use not only the General Training module tests, but also Academic module reading. This advice has 2 main reasons behind it – there are more Academic texts available to practice on than General Training, and it is a proven strategy to get your score higher, because while hoping for the best you are preparing for the worst. Academic reading is much more difficult than General training, and if you are ready for Academic – General will be a piece of cake for you.

Generally, you need to buy texts to practice on, but I have managed to find a few sources of free tests and recommend them to you.

<http://www.gday.ru/ielts/reading/generalreading/>
<http://www.gday.ru/ielts/reading/academicreading/>
http://www.ielts.org/lib/pdf/1969_IELTSappForm05.pdf
http://www.onestopenglish.com/Exams/pdfs/uffizi_reading.pdf
http://www.selfaccess.com/www/sa/sa/htm/sa_samples.php
<http://education.kulichki.net/lang/ieread.html>
http://international.holmesglen.vic.edu.au/ie_read.htm
http://www.ieltshelpnow.com/sample_tutorials.html
http://www.examenglish.com/IELTS_reading.htm

<http://9ielts.topcities.com>,
<http://www.aippg.net/forum/>,

Tips for the Writing test

As you remember, in Writing test of General Training Module there are 2 tasks:

Writing Task 1 - to write a letter.

Writing Task 2 - to write an essay.

Writing a letter must not take you more than 20 minutes, so there will be 40 minutes left for the essay. Usually, not all of us are good in writing letters, not to say essays, forget in English! Well, SURPRISE – there is a technique to it, making writing so simple, a monkey could do it. So let's get down to business.

First, some general guidelines

You will receive two Answering Sheets to write on – one for the Writing Task 1, meaning letter, and one for Writing Task 2, meaning essay. Keep your writing neat, clean and nice-looking. Leave blank line between paragraphs and don't write on margins of the Answering Sheet. Don't make a mess even if you have made a mistake – just cross it out once.

If there are instructions that say that you need to write about a number of things (let's say A, B, C) – do it, write about every one of them. It is important for your score. You need to show the examiner that you read and understood the instructions; otherwise he might think that you didn't.

Here is an example of such instructions:

- Describe the situation
- Explain your problem
- Suggest solution

One of the most typical mistakes is to copy task instructions. It is absolutely forbidden, wastes precious time and people lose points for it. You can use what is written in task instructions only if you write the same in other words.

Length is very important. So if you can not reach the words limit (150 for letter, 250 for essay), try to be closer to it.

These simple rules apply to both letter and essay. Stick to them, and your work will leave good impression on the examiner.

Tips for Writing Task 1 - Letter

Types of letters

Test may ask you to write only one of **4 types** of letters:

- **Complaint / Request (of information) letter**
- **Job application letter**
- **Personal letter**
- **Formal business letter**

There are rules how to write a letter of each type. When a letter is graded by IELTS examiners, its structure, vocabulary and fluency of language are equally important. So I will show here a model for every one of the letter types together with phrases and forms of speech, and the only thing you need to do is to insert your specific topic information in it. I also supply you with examples to demonstrate what your letter should look like.

Complaint

This is a letter you write to complain about something. It could be something you have purchased or a bad service that you have received, or an accident that happened to you. You must describe it and demand appropriate actions from relevant people.

There are **4 paragraphs** in this type of letter. They should look like this:

1. Start with “Dear Sir/Madam,“ (or write person’s name if it was given in task instructions)
Explain shortly (in one or two sentences) what you are complaining about.
“I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the tape recorder that I purchased in your store.”
2. Explain in more details
 - a) What happened, what the problem is.
“I purchased a tape recorder in your store on 12/3/2005, just 3 days ago. After a few times that I used it, the “Play” button broke off”.

- b) What are you unhappy about.
“I was very surprised to see the new improved model with 2 years of warranty breaking so soon and for no reason at all.”
- c) What did you do to resolve the situation.
“I contacted your store immediately in order to return the tape recorder and spoke to the shift manager. He refused to replace the tape recorder and suggested that I had it repaired.”
- d) How do you feel about the problem.
“You can imagine how receiving this offer upset me.”

This paragraph should be the longest in the whole letter. You can even divide it into several parts.

- 3. Write what you would like them to do, and what will you do if they don't give you what you want.
“I insist that you replace the damaged tape recorder and send me a new one. Otherwise I will be forced to stop my payments to your store”.
- 4. Write formal ending for the letter, your name and sign.
“I look forward to hearing from you.”
If you **know** the name of person you are writing to, sign
“Yours **sincerely**,
Mr. Smith”
If you **don't know** the name of person you are writing to, sign
“Yours **faithfully**,
Mr. Smith”

Useful phrases

The following phrases will make your letter look good. In case it is hard for you to remember all of them, choose just one for each paragraph, memorize it and use for all the letters of this type.

For Paragraph 1

- “I am writing to complain about...”
- “I am writing in regard to...”
- “The reason I am writing to you is (a problem with...)”
- “I am writing to express my concern about/dissatisfaction with...”
- “I would like to bring the matter of ... to your attention.”
- “I would like to draw your attention to ...”

For paragraph 2

- “I was supposed to receive ... Unfortunately, that never happened.”
- “You can imagine how unhappy I was to discover ...”
- “I regret to inform you that your service was below my expectations.”
- “When I tried to contact you by phone, no one could offer me any sensible answer.”
- “I contacted your representative in Unfortunately, he denied me the service that I requested.”

For paragraph 3

- “The ideal solution would be ... “
- “I hope you can settle this matter by ...(doing something)”
- “I insist on getting a refund of ...”
- “Please look into this matter as soon as possible.”
- “I believe this matter deserves your urgent attention.”

Example of Complaint

This example demonstrates what a good letter of complaint should look like. There are notes on the margins, which indicate paragraphs numbers as explained on pages 26-27. You don't need to write them in your own letter. It is enough to just leave blank line between the paragraphs

Dear Sir/Madam,

The reason I am writing to you is poor quality of a food processor, which I bought in your store two weeks ago. After only two times it was in use, problems started to appear.

The first malfunction that I noticed was safety lock that demanded applying of great force. My wife had to ask me for help, because she wasn't strong enough to push the safety lock through. We discovered another problem when tried to use the blender. I put some ice-cream and milk in the blender and pushed the "Start" button. It started working but suddenly got stuck and we were unable to use it since. I was very surprised to discover that much problems in a quite expensive model.

Naturally, I returned the blender to you to be replaced with a new one. Your assistant said that I would have to wait only a week. After two weeks the food processor had still not arrived. Finally, four weeks later, I was contacted by your representative. Imagine my feelings when I learned from him that I can not receive the same model of food processor as I bought. As a solution he offered that I upgrade my model to a better one and this too will take two weeks.

I am very disappointed with both the equipment and the service have I received. Therefore I expect a full refund of 180\$ as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,
Mr. Smith.

1

2a

2b

2c

2d

3

4

Request of information letter

This is a letter you write to ask a person for information. For example, you may need to receive the trains' timetable, or list of books on certain topic from a library or an itinerary for a trip you have booked to Africa.

There are **3 paragraphs** in this type of letter. They should look like this:

1. Start with "Dear Sir/Madam," (or write person's name if it was given in task instructions)
Explain shortly (in one or two sentences) what kind of information you are interested in.
"I am writing to ask for information about membership in the Shape sports club."
2. Explain in more details who you are, exactly what information you need, why, when and in what form do you need it – a letter, a fax, an e-mail, a phone-call, etc. This should be the biggest paragraph of the whole letter.
3. Write formal ending for the letter, your name and sign.
"I look forward to hearing from you."
If you **know the name** of person you are writing to, sign
"Yours **sincerely**,
Mr. Smith"
If you **don't know the name** of person you are writing to, sign
"Yours **faithfully**,
Mr. Smith"

Example of Request letter

This example demonstrates what a good letter of request for information should look like. There are notes on the margins, which indicate paragraphs numbers as explained on pages 30. You don't need to write them in your own letter. It is enough to just leave blank line between the paragraphs

Dear Sir/Madam,	
I am writing to ask for complete itinerary of a trip to Africa that I booked with your company.	1
The trip I refer to starts on August 12, 2005. I am supposed to leave with a group of 16 people. The information I would like to obtain should include the following: 1) Names and phone numbers of other people in my group 2) Airline names, flight numbers, departure and arrival times. 3) Names and locations of hotels that you have booked for me, and on what bases, bed and breakfast, half board or full board. 4) A list of optional day trips that are available and their prices. 5) A list of local doctors I can contact in case of emergency. 6) A contact number for your company representative in Africa. 7) A receipt for the payment I have made on July 28, 2005.	2
You could send the above-mentioned information to my e-mail or a fax. I would like to receive it as soon as possible but not later than a week before my flight.	
I look forward to hearing from you.	3
Yours faithfully, Mr. Smith	

Job application letter

This is a letter you write to apply for a certain position that is vacant. In the real life you would attach your resume to it. Of course, you don't have to do it for IELTS, writing the letter is enough.

There are **4 paragraphs** in this type of letter. They should look like this:

1. Start with "Dear Sir/Madam," (or write person's name if it was given in task instructions)
Write what position are you applying to, and where it was advertised.
"I would like to apply for the position of secretary advertised in 'Herald Tribune' of April 15th 2005."
2. Write about your skills, diplomas and experience.
"I am a Software Engineer with more then ten years of experience in ..."
"I graduated in Some Study Course from Famous University, 1996"
"At present I am employed as a ... by company ..."
"I am familiar with..."
"My skills include working with ..., performing ..., managing..."
"In course of my present job I have been responsible for the planning and organization of ..."
"I am used to working at a fast pace to meet deadlines".
As in previous types of letters, this paragraph should be the "fattest" in the whole letter.
3. Explain, why you are interested in this job, express your motivation to contribute. Ask to schedule an interview as soon as possible.
"I would like to apply my skills in your company."
"I believe the position you offer will give me opportunity to..."
"If you find my skills and experience suitable, please contact me to schedule an interview."
"I am looking forward to discussing my credentials with you personally."
4. Thank the person.
"Thank you for your time and consideration."
If you know the name of person you are writing to, sign
"Yours sincerely,
Mr. Smith"
If you don't know the name of person you are writing to, sign
"Yours faithfully,
Mr. Smith"

Example of Job Application

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to apply for the position of flight attendant, advertised in "The Wings" issue of October 2005.

As you can see from my CV, I am a flight attendant with 5 years of experience. I had a one-year apprenticeship with United Airways, and the following 3 years I worked for Sky-High Airlines. The last year I was working for AirComfort Airlines, providing customer service to first class passengers.

I have a pleasant personality and good communication skills. I am familiar with service and emergency instructions, and used to working unsupervised. My experience includes administering first aid to ill passengers and dealing with unusual incidents. I am available to work weekends, holydays and overtime.

If you find my skills and experience suitable, please contact me to schedule an interview. I am looking forward to discussing my credentials with you personally.

Thanks you for your time and consideration.

Yours faithfully,
S. Holts

Personal Letter

Personal letter is usually written to a friend or a relative. It doesn't have many strict rules. I have a couple of suggestions that will make your life easier:

1. Start with something like "Dear Linda," or "My dearest Charlie,"
Then apologize that you forgot to write.
"I am sorry I haven't written for so long."
Next, write the purpose of your letter
"I am writing to thank/tell/ask/apologize/wish..."
2. Start writing on a topic from paragraph 1. Once again, this paragraph must be the biggest one. If possible, try to write 2 paragraphs (2a and 2b).
3. Sign : "With best wishes, Kathy"
"Yours, Louise"
"With love and many thanks from me, Diana"

Example of Personal Letter

Dear Sarah,

I am sorry I haven't written for so long. My work keeps me so busy, that I never have a minute to myself. I am writing to invite you to my wedding.

Since you have never met my future husband, you must have a million questions running through your mind right now. I hope I can tell you enough to put your mind at ease until we meet. Five months ago I decided to take a cruise to Bahamas, to get away for a little while. And on that cruise Faith arraigned for me to meet my future husband Alan. He is the most wonderful, loving person you could ever imagine and we are very happy together.

The wedding will take place at my parents' mansion. The date is October 17, at 7 o'clock. I am so looking forward to introducing you to Alan, and he can't wait to meet you too. I told him all about you and our friendship.

With love,
Amy.

1

2a

2b

3

Formal Business letter

Any letter other than Complaint, Request, Job application, or Personal is a Business letter. It could be an explanation you write to a library about the books that were never returned, or a letter to Car Rental Company, describing the road accident you were involved in.

There are **4 paragraphs** in this type of letter. They should look like this:

1. Start with “Dear Sir/Madam,” (or write person’s name if it was given in task instructions)
Explain shortly (in one or two sentences) who you are and/or what are you writing about.
“I am writing in regard to books I borrowed from the library on March 15, 2005 and never returned”.
2. Explain in more details the purpose of your letter. Consider the idea that task instructions give you, write according to it. Make up interesting details in addition to the original idea. This should be the biggest paragraph of the whole letter.
3. Say what kind of answer you expect or what suggestions do you have for the situation. It is also a good place to apologize, if applicable.
4. Write formal ending for the letter, your name and sign.
“I look forward to hearing from you.”
If you **know** the name of person you are writing to, sign
“Yours **sincerely**,
Mr. Smith”
If you **don’t know** the name of person you are writing to, sign
“Yours **faithfully**,
Mr. Smith”

Example of Formal Business letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to apologize about keeping books that I borrowed from the college library 3 days ago longer than it is acceptable. **1**

I have found myself in this unpleasant situation for a reason. My close relative was very sick and I had to go visit him at the hospital. I intended to return the books immediately after I get back to the college, but unfortunately I left the books on a train on my way from the hospital to the library. It will take me about two days to get them back from "Lost and Found" department at the train station. **2**

I understand that other students may need those books and deeply apologize for the inconvenience. I will try to return the books as soon as possible. Please don't revoke my library privileges, I promise that it will never happen again. **3**

Faithfully yours, **4**
John Smith.

Do it right!

Now, when you know what a letter should look like, it's time you learn the technique **how to write it fast**. It works for absolutely any kind of letter. After writing a couple of letters you will realize, that writing down a 150 words alone takes you 15 minutes, plus you have to think of a story to tell in your letter, to make it interesting.

So this is how you do it:

1. When you get the writing assignment, first look and understand what kind of letter do you need to write: complaint/request, business, job application or personal.
2. Read the assignment and write down on the draft paper 3 first things that come to your mind. Those ideas must refer to the topic directly. If there are a number of things you need to write about, refer to **every one** of them. Make things up, be creative, it doesn't have to be the absolute truth. Stop right there, no more thinking!
3. Start writing. First paragraph requires no thinking – write 1-2 sentences that explain the topic of your letter.
4. Remember the 3 things you made up? Use them while you are writing paragraph two. Make it the largest paragraph because it is your only chance to get 150 words in the letter.
5. When paragraph two is done, paragraph three and four (if applicable) are a piece of cake, because they generally are based on paragraph two.
6. After you have finished writing, read the letter once again and check for spelling and punctuation errors.

Practice, practice, practice!

I believe that practicing in writing is a must. Use the following topics to practice in writing letters as much as you can. They will also help you understand better how to **classify** the letter tasks – to know what kind of letter you need to write.

Complaint letters tasks

Topic 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You have bought a mobile phone in a tax-free shop just a few days ago, and it doesn't work properly.

Task: Write a letter to the manager to complain about it and ask him to solve the problem.

You do not need to write your address.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,

Topic 2

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You rented a car from Car Rental Company. The air conditioner has stopped working. You phoned the company a week ago but it has still not been repaired.

Write a letter to the company. In your letter

- introduce yourself
- explain the situation
- say what action you would like the company to take

You do not need to write your address.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,

Request of Information letter tasks

Topic 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You are a student who wants to apply to Green Pines College. You are experiencing financial problems at the moment.

Task: Write a letter to the Principal of the College, explaining your situation and ask for information on scholarships or other means of financial help available.

You do not need to write your address.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,

Topic 2

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You would like to participate in a work-related seminar in another country.

Task: Write a letter to the person in charge of the seminar and ask for detailed information regarding the dates, program, accommodations and cost.

You do not need to write your address.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,

Job Application letter task

Topic 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You want to apply for the following job. Write a letter to Mrs. Keller describing your previous experience and explaining why you would be suitable for the job.

Advertisement: Housekeeper required for private home. Experience is necessary. Contact Mrs. D. Keller.

*You do not need to write your address.
Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,*

Personal letters tasks

Topic 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You stayed at your friends' house when you participated in a business seminar in Australia. You left a file with important documents in your room.

Task: Write a letter to your friend, describing the file and ask him/her to return it to you by post.

*You do not need to write your address.
Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,*

Topic 2

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You migrated to another country.

Task: Write a letter to your friend to describe your present life and tell him/her why you choose this country.

*You do not need to write your address.
Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,*

Business Letter tasks

Topic 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You successfully passed a job interview. You are expected to start on November 15, but you will not be available on that date.

Task: Write a letter to your new boss, explaining your situation, expressing your concern and suggesting solution.

You do not need to write your address.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,

Topic 2

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You are a gift shop keeper.

Task: Write a letter to your supplier, to let him know that you won't need the merchandise you have ordered. Explain your situation and suggest solution.

You do not need to write your address.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,

Topic 3

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task and write at least 150 words.

You are a secretary, planning a corporate event.

Task: Write a letter to Entertainment Company explaining what kind of party you would like it to be, indicate date and time of event and your special requests.

You do not need to write your address.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir/Madam,

Tips for Writing Task 2 - Essay

You don't have to be a writer to write a good essay. This task may look even harder than the letter, but it is only a first impression. Just follow the rules, keep the right structure, use some "smart" words and practice a little. This way you can easily reach a level, where no matter what topic they give you, after 40 minutes you turn a beautiful 2 pages long essay and walk out of the room with a huge smile on your face.

Structure of essay

Every essay should have this exact structure: **introduction**, **body** and **conclusion**. It is very important because your grade is affected by it. Introduction usually takes one paragraph, body – two or three paragraphs and conclusion – one paragraph.

Essay topics – 3 different kinds

There are only 3 kinds of essay topics in IELTS, let's call them **A**, **H**, **S**.

Topics "**A**" present an **Argument** and you need to explore pros and cons, reasons for and against, while you support only one side.

Topics "**H**" present a **Hidden argument**. These topics usually ask "To what extent ...?", "In what way...?", "How has something change...?".

Topics "**S**" present a **Situation** and you need to explore **reasons** why it is what it is, assume what will happen in the future and suggest solutions to problems, if required.

The following **examples** demonstrate the difference between topics of A, H or S kind:

A: "Modern society benefits greatly from computer technology. However, becoming more dependent on computer has its disadvantages. Discuss threats of computers."
Here the 2 sides of argument are the advantages and disadvantages of computers.

H: "To what extent should television participate in our children's education?"
What they **really** ask here is whether the television should educate the children or not.

S: "Due to change of women's role in modern society, men are now the ones suffering from sexual discrimination. Do you agree?"
Here you can see the description of situation and you have to write what you think about it.

Essay of A(rgument) kind

1. **Introduction** paragraph must clearly state the argument, both sides of it.

Do not simply copy the topic from instruction, write it in **other** words.
Don't give your opinion, save it for later.

2. **Body** paragraphs (at least 2) must refer to each side of the argument. Write first paragraph about the side you disagree with. The side you do agree with should be in the **last** body paragraph, because this way it naturally leads to conclusion.
3. **Conclusion** paragraph should contain summary of the points you were making. Never mind if the paragraph turns out to be short, the important thing is that you kept the structure of the essay.

Essay of H(idden Argument) kind

1. **Introduction** paragraph must define the question. You need to reveal the hidden argument. Rewrite the topic, so it will say what it **really** means:
from "to what extent something affects..." **to** "Does something affect..."
from "in what way something contributes?" **to** "does something contribute?"
from "how does something influence..." **to** "does something influence ...?"
Now it became an argument with two sides, and you write essay of kind "A".

Essay of S(ituation) kind

1. **Introduction** paragraph must state the situation and explain it. Don't give your opinion here.
2. **Body** paragraphs (at least 2) should describe reasons that lead to the situation, making it like it is now. Each paragraph should talk about one reason.
3. **Conclusion** paragraph should summarize the points of the essay. If the task requires suggesting solution to problems, recommendations, advice - this is the place for it. If your opinion is required – you should also give it in conclusion paragraph.

General suggestions

- Write on given topic directly, don't slide to another theme.
- Write in general, not about your personal experiences, but what is going on in the world.
- Read task instructions and write about **every** little thing that is requested. If the task requires suggesting solution – do it. Don't forget to give recommendations or advice, if requested.

Baby Steps through essay

After you have read all that, you still have no idea how to start writing.
So let's do it together:

First 

Read and classify the question. You need to decide what kind of topic you have got, an A, H or S. It will affect the way you plan an essay.

Example:

*“Home schooling belongs to the past and is unacceptable in the modern society. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?
Use your own knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence”*

We can clearly see a hidden argument here. By revealing the real meaning of the topic we get “Is home schooling acceptable in modern society?”. This way it becomes an “A” topic, an argument with 2 sides – for and against home education.

Second



Here you need to come up with ideas, thoughts and opinions on the given topic. The best way to do it is to think of some *main* ideas and then to write everything you can think of regarding those ideas. In case you are working on essay of “A” or “H” kind, these ideas are opposite sides of the argument. If you are working on essay of kind “S” – it is the reasons for the situation to be what it is.

Example:

Let's say that after some thinking you came up with the following ideas, and your opinion is **against** the education at home.

For:

parents know their children

learning is more enjoyable

children feel safe

Against:

no scientific approach (like associative learning)

not every parent is capable

parents forgot the material

Now you should think what goes where in your essay. On the same draft paper you have written the ideas, group them and decide which paragraph will describe which idea. If the topic is an argument (type A), remember to put side you don't agree with first and the side you do agree with second. Think how you move from one paragraph to another. There should be a connective logical sentence that drives you towards next paragraph's topic.

Example:

Parents know their children	-1 st body paragraph – side you don't agree with
Learning is more enjoyable	-1 st body paragraph
Children feel safe	-1 st body paragraph

no scientific approach	-2 nd body paragraph – side you do agree with
associative learning	-2 nd body paragraph
not every parent is capable	-3 rd body paragraph
parents forgot the material	-3 rd body paragraph

Third



It is time to write the answer. According to the plan you have made, start writing the essay. First sentence of introduction gives main idea of the essay, either presenting sides of the argument or describing a situation. The last sentence of introduction should naturally lead into first paragraph of the body. Remember to keep the paragraph structure and to connect paragraphs so one will lead to another.

Important! Try to start body paragraphs with a linking word (like However, Therefore, Moreover, Nevertheless, etc.). It raises your score.

Example:

This is an essay written according to the ideas you came up with. The ideas are in bold font for easier understanding.

Everything has two sides and home schooling is not an exception. In the past it seemed like the most natural way of educating the children, but today many people criticize it.

*We must acknowledge that **parents know their children best**. That gives them a good chance of knowing how to make child understand certain concepts. Using child's interests, parents can make a process of **learning more enjoyable** and effective. In addition, being at home makes **child feel safe**, which contributes to his ability to concentrate on studying.*

*Nevertheless, many people believe that teaching should be done by professionals. There are many proven **scientific approaches** that produce good results and without those techniques parents who teach their kids at home have no chance of success. **Associative learning** is a good example of such a technique. Showing the child images while learning the alphabet (apple for "a", boy for "b") makes him or her remember the letters faster and easier.*

*Also **not every parent is capable** of teaching his or her child at home because the blind can not lead the blind. Parents can not teach the children something they don't know themselves, and let's face it – not all of us have profound knowledge of history or geography even on a school textbook level. Eventually, even those mums and dads who had succeeded at school could **forget the material** as the time went by.*

In conclusion, I have more trust in abilities and experience of professional teachers than I do in my own.

And finally - read the essay carefully from the beginning and check it for errors.

40 minutes? Not enough!

Almost no one can get their first essays done on time. So don't be disappointed if it takes you an hour or even longer. First try to get used to the Baby Steps process that I explained earlier. After a little bit of practice, you will start writing essays faster and faster, and finally you will reach your goal – essay in 40 minutes. You should work with a clock all the time – this is the only way for you to monitor your progress.

Helpful phrases

Usually people who don't read and write in English every day have trouble expressing themselves in essay. So I enclose here a list of phrases to help you write more elegant sentences.

Phrases to show two sides of argument

- “Some people prefer Those who disagree point out that...”
- “We must acknowledge ... Nevertheless, ...”
- “No one can deny ... However, ...”
- “Many people hold the opinion... Others, however, disagree...”
- “Although it is hard to compete with ..., some people still prefer ...”

Phrases to add

- “Not only..., but...”
- “Also
- “Furthermore,”
- “In addition,”
- “Moreover,”

Phrases to deny what was said before

- “Although...”
- “However,”
- “Nevertheless,”
- “Even if...”
- “In spite of”
- “On the other hand”

Phrases for examples

- “For example,”
- “For instance,”
- “In particular,”
- “..., such as”
- “To illustrate ...”

Phrases for results

- “As a result”
- “Therefore”
- “Thus”
- “So”
- “Eventually”

Phrases for conclusion

- “Lastly,”
- “Finally,”
- “To conclude with,”
- “In short,”
- “In conclusion,”

Practice, practice, practice!

My advice would be to practice on essays as much as you can. Your goal is to be able to write essay of 250 words in 40 minutes on any given topic. Topic doesn't matter, the important thing is that you know and implement the technique you've learned. So for those of you, who don't take chances, follows list of topics similar to those you will get in IELTS. Practice with a clock and count words. Enjoy!

Topic 1

You are advised to spend the maximum of 40 minutes on this task.

Even though globalization affects the world's economics in a very positive way, its negative side should not be forgotten. Discuss.

You should write at least 250 words.

Topic 2

You are advised to spend the maximum of 40 minutes on this task.

Some people say that education system is the only critical factor to development of a country. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

You should write at least 250 words.

Topic 3

You are advised to spend the maximum of 40 minutes on this task.

Dieting can change a person's life for the better or ruin one's health completely. What is your opinion?

You should write at least 250 words.

Topic 4

You are advised to spend the maximum of 40 minutes on this task.

Financial education should be mandatory component of the school program. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

You should write at least 250 words.

Topic 5

You are advised to spend the maximum of 40 minutes on this task.

The best way to reduce the number of traffic accidents is to raise age limit for the younger drivers and lower age limit for the aged ones. Do you agree?

You should write at least 250 words.

Topic 6

You are advised to spend the maximum of 40 minutes on this task.

Ecological balance is impossible to archive when technological progress constantly ruins our environment. Do you agree?

You should write at least 250 words.

Tips for the Speaking test

Finally, we have reached the fun part of IELTS. Many people agree that the secret of success in the Speaking test is being confident and creative person. Does it mean that others will fail? Not at all! This test is **PREDICTABLE**. Use the following tips to prepare yourself to what's coming and the confidence will come.

What are they looking for?

If you know what is important to IELTS examiners, it improves your chances of success. These guidelines refer to every part of the Speaking test. Stick to them and you will satisfy your examiner.

- Speak without long pauses (when you are trying to think of something to say)
- Understand what the examiner asks you and confirm that by answering accordingly.
- Demonstrate how many "smart" words you know.
- Use all the tenses when you speak - past, present, future – and use them **correctly**.
- Pronounce the words correctly. For example the word “culture” should sound like “kolcher”, not “kultur”.
- **Important!** Accent has nothing to do with pronunciation, so it *will not* affect your score.

Keep it simple!

This tip refers to the whole Speaking test. Don't start long and complicated sentences if you don't know how to finish them! Keep your sentences simple, and words - understandable. If you make grammatical error – it's ok to correct yourself, but don't overdo it, you must sound fluent.

When you hear a question, your mind automatically draws an image with the answer. You can describe this image in your own language, but when you start to describe it in English, suddenly you don't have enough words in your vocabulary. So try to think of what part of that image you **can** describe, do it and stop there. Don't let yourself show what words you don't know by saying incomplete sentences.

Interview

The first part of the Speaking test is the Interview. You enter the room, see the examiner, say “Good morning!” and smile. He or she asks to see your passport and to sit down. If he/she offers to shake your hand – do it, otherwise – don’t.

Your body language is important here, it must show that you are relaxed and confident. When you are talking, try to make eye contact with the examiner as much as you can.

During the interview the examiner asks you questions about yourself, your work, studies, parents, brothers/sisters, pets, etc. Your answer to each question should consist of one or two sentences; try not to answer with just “Yes” or “No”. After all it’s your English they want to hear.

This is an easy task to prepare for. Read carefully the following questions and answers, and you will get a very clear picture of what will happen.

Possible questions and answers

1. Where do you come from?

I live in Smallville. It is a big city /small town located in the south of NeverNeverLand.

2. What is your home like?

I rent an apartment. We have two bedrooms, one living room, one kitchen and of course one restroom. The apartment is not very big, about 70 square meters.

3. What the advantages and disadvantages your home has?

The advantage is that my accommodation has lots of sunlight from the windows. And the disadvantage is that it is noisy because the centre of the city is near by.

4. Tell me about your family.

I have a mother, a father and a brother. My mother is a social worker, my father is a civil engineer and my brother is a student.

5. Tell me about your job.

Well, I work for a big firm /small company named BananaSoft. It is located in Smallville. My job title is Software Designer.

6. Is there anything you dislike about your job?

Normally, I enjoy my job very much. But sometimes my boss gives me boring assignments, which I don’t like at all.

7. What are your plans for the future?

I would like to improve my English first and then to find another job with better salary.

8. What type of transport do you use most?

There are 2 types of transport that I use: I either drive my car or take the bus.

9. Do you like reading?

Yes I do. I enjoy reading very much. Usually, I read every other day of the week.

10. What do you like reading the best?

I enjoy reading news papers, magazines and of course my favorite fantasy books.

11. What kind of television programs do you watch?

Well, my favorite channel is Some TV Channel. I find it very interesting and educational.

12. Tell me about a film you have seen recently

I saw "Some New Movie" a week ago. It is a comedy and I like comedies. This one has some silly jokes but other than that I enjoyed it.

13. Do you have a pet?

Yes I do. I have a dog named Richy. He is 4 years old.

14. What kind of food do you like?

I prefer Asian cooking, mostly Chinese. My favorite dish is noodles with vegetables.

15. How often do you go shopping?

Well, I don't like shopping, so I do it only when I have to.

16. What is your favorite festival and why?

I like October Fest. It's a German festival that starts in late September and ends in October. People drink lots of beer at October Fest and that is why I like it.

17. How do people celebrate this festival?

Well, they build pavilions and stands that sell beer and all kinds of food, a lot of bands are playing there. People from all around Europe come to celebrate the October Fest dressed in German Traditional clothes.

Speech

After you have finished the Interview, the examiner will hand you a card with 3 or 4 questions on. Usually the card asks you to describe a place, an event or a situation from your experience. You have 1 minute to prepare a little speech that answers all of the questions on a card. You also receive a paper sheet and a pen to write your notes.

The speech should take from one to two minutes. In the end the examiner might ask you a couple of additional questions.

The tricky part here is to know when 2 minutes have passed. You need to get a feeling what is it like to talk for 2 minutes. My suggestion is to practice at home with a clock, recording yourself while you are speaking on a particular topic. You can use MP3 players that can record. This way you can evaluate your own speech without any help from other people.

Example

Let's take the following topic card and see what kind of speech you should give:

Describe a journey you went on. You should include in your answer:

- Where you went on your journey
- Why you went to this particular place
- What did you do and with whom
- Why you enjoyed your journey or not

Possible answer:

"I would like to tell you about a journey I went on a year ago. My wife and I took a trip to Holland.

Both of us wanted to visit Amsterdam very much because we saw pictures and heard stories of friends about how beautiful and wonderful it is. So finally we bought plane tickets, booked a hotel, packed our bags and our trip began.

We spent a lot of time before our holiday in research of all the interesting places to visit and all the sights to see. So we went to Amstell Beer museum, took a romantic sunset cruise in the water channels, drove to Volendam, a small prettiest fisherman village, visited a cheese farm. Every evening we took long walks along the channels, resting in small gardens, which Amsterdam has a lot of. Street artists were performing everywhere and a lot of people came to watch their show.

We enjoyed very much everything we did and especially being together in such a beautiful country. Having my wife by my side on this trip made it even more fun."

Practice, practice, practice

I have included here a selection of cards for you to practice on. Choose a card, prepare for 1 minute, writing down the points you will speak about. When you start speaking, try not to get in trouble – don't use words unless you know what they mean, don't use long complicated sentences where you get lost in words. Try to speak simply and make it sound interesting.

Describe a book that has had a major influence on you.

You should include in your answer:

- What is the name of that book and who is the author
- How you first heard of it
- What is that book about
- Why it played such an important role in your life

Describe your favorite restaurant.

You should include in your answer:

- Where it is located in city
- What does it look like inside and outside
- What kind of food is served there
- What makes this restaurant so special to you and others

Describe a museum you visited. You should say:

- Where this museum is situated?
- Why people visit the museum?
- What did it look like?
- Why you liked this museum?

Describe a conflict at work you once had

You should mention:

- The nature of the conflict
- Why the conflict occurred
- What you felt at the time of the conflict
- What you had to do to resolve it

Discussion

In the third sub-part of the test you have a discussion with examiner. The topic is somehow related to the one from section two, but it is about more abstract ideas. Your job is to express and justify an opinion. It is called a discussion, but in reality *you are the one who does most of the talking*.

To give you an idea what it will be like, here is a card you might get in part 2 of Speaking test:

Describe a good friend of yours. You should say

- Where and when did you meet
- What did you do together
- What do you like about him/her
- Why is he/she a good friend of yours

Then in third sub-part of the Speaking test the examiner may ask you these kinds of questions:

- Who can not be a good friend of yours? Tell the properties of such a person
- What do you value and not value in people?
- Can people, opposite in personality, be good friends?
- What do the children think about friendship? What about the adults? Compare them.
- What do you think of friendship through internet? What good and bad sides does it have?

Have an opinion!

Now, when you get the idea, how do you prepare for this kind of test?

Well, you need to have an opinion on wide range of different topics.

I include here a list of most common topics for you to think about.

Just go over them, think of what do you have to say on those issues, think of which words you will use. Then record yourself saying a couple of sentences on each of those topics and listen to what comes out. Think of what you could have done better. This should get you ready for the Discussion part.

So think about:

General topics

- Main industry in your country now, how it will develop in the future
- Pollution affecting ecology
- Popular transportation in your country
- How to have better public transport
- How your country has been improved
- City you are living in, it's advantages and disadvantages
- Your country's weather, main season
- Your country's animals, in what ways are they used.
- Piece of equipment that you consider very important, why, how did you start to use it
- Computers - their advantages and disadvantages, whether people of different sexes and ages use them more or less
- Food in restaurants, why and when we eat there, what are pros and cons of eating in a restaurant
- Celebrities in your country
- Idols - who chooses them, why copy them, etc.
- Favorite holiday in your country

Household

- Who does the shopping
- Where do you like to shop and when
- What do you shop for
- Who does house works, which work in the most important, why

About yourself

- How do you like spending your time
- Favorite movies(films), do you watch them on TV or in cinema
Would you like to act in movies? Why not?
- Where you like to spend your vacation
- Study or work, where, what do you like most about your job, what do you dislike about your job
- Your future plans
- Your hobbies
- Do you think free time is important and why
- What did you study at university
- Which subject is your favorite
- Which subject you don't like
- What do you want to do in the future
- Your favorite food
- Greatest success in your life
- Design of your apartment, like, dislike, why
- What room do you like most, what you do there most, what it looks like
- Your favorite sportsmen
- Favorite TV program
- Most interesting time in your life

Things that were important in your life

- Song
- Book - what about, how did it influence you
- Doll or some other toy, who gave it to you, on what occasion, what did you do with it

Friends

- Who is your best friend
- Where and when did you meet
- What do you like the best about him/her
- What have you done together? Explain the reasons of your good friendship
- What do the children think about friendship? What about the adults? Compare them
- Who can not be a good friend of yours? Tell the properties of such a person
- Can people, opposite in personality, be good friends?
- What do you value and not value in people
- Friendship through internet, good and bad sides

Traveling

- How can a visitor travel in my country
- How did my grandparents travel in the past
- Will the travel method change in the future
- Traveling in group compared single traveling
- What kinds of holidays exist
- Where people prefer to go on vacation
- Applications that have positive effect on growth of tourism

Toys

- Why boys and girls chose different toys
- Why toys are good for kids
- Negative influence of toys, educational side of toys

Music

- What kind of music do you like,
- Why we should teach music to our kids

What if ...?

It can happen that the examiner asks you a question and you don't have a clue what is he/she talking about. Don't panic! Just say:

- I am not sure what you mean, could you be more specific?
- Could you repeat the question, please?

If you don't have a ready answer and you are trying to borrow some time, say:

- Well, I never thought about that, but if I do, I would say that...
- Well, it is not a simple question.

If they ask for your opinion, you can start by saying:

- In my opinion...
- I think that...
- Well, if you ask me, ...
- When it comes to me, I ...

You will probably have to speak in present, past and future tenses. When asked to speak about future, say:

- I am sure that (something will/won't happen)
- It is likely/unlikely that (some event will / won't occur)

Leave a good impression

FINALLY!!! When leaving the room after the interview, look the examiner in the eyes, smile and simply say: "Thank you for your time. Good bye".
Isn't life great? ☺

Pocket tips

Listening

- Read instructions.
- Guess what is missing: is it a word, a place, a name, a number, how many?
- Divide questions into groups.
- Listen for details.
- Loud and clear – answer, whisper – not.
- Repetition and dictation – answer.
- Multiple choices – use T/F/NG method to eliminate all choices but one.
- Gap fills – look around the gaps for clues (Bad grammar = wrong answer).
- Traps: Change of mind, generalization, explicit answers.
- Copy answers: just the letter, not the circle,
just your answer, not the whole sentence.

Reading

- Read instructions
- Manage your time.
- Make a map.
- Easy questions first – complicated second.
- Look for keywords.
- Matching headings – use the map.
- T/F/NG: Clearly said = True
Opposite to what is said = False
Now what is said = Not Given
- Multiple Choices – use T/F/NG method to eliminate all choices but one.
- Gap fills – use the map to find where the answer is hiding.
- Don't make assumptions!
- Have time left – check your answers.

Speaking

<u>Interview:</u>	Be confident and relaxed Eye contact with the examiner Answer every question with in at least 2 sentences
<u>Speech:</u>	Write down main points Speak simply - no big words if you aren't sure how to use them Make it sound interesting
<u>Discussion:</u>	Have an opinion on everything Any opinion is acceptable (no "good" or "bad" opinions) In the end thank the examiner and shake hands

Writing

Letters:

Complaint

1. What are you complaining about?
2. a) What is the problem?
b) Why is that a problem?
c) What did you do to resolve the situation?
d) What was the result?
3. What do you want to be done?
4. Faithfully Yours,
Smith

Request of information

1. What info do you need in general?
2. a) Who are you?
b) What exactly do you need to know?
3. How do you want to get this info:
phone call, e-mail, fax, letter?
4. Faithfully Yours,
Smith

Business

1. What is the general purpose of this letter?
2. a) Who you are?
b) Why do you write this letter (details)?
3. What kind of answer do you expect?
Suggestions, solutions, etc.
4. Faithfully Yours,
Smith

Job application

1. What position are you applying for?
2. What are your skills, diplomas, experience?
3. a) Why do you want this job?
b) You want to get an interview.
4. Thanks for consideration,
Faithfully Yours,
Smith

Essay:

3 types of topics: Argument, Hidden argument, Situation

Plan for Argument and Hidden Argument topic type (5 paragraphs)

1. Introduction – 2 sides of the argument
2. Write about side you don't agree with
3. Write about side you do agree with
4. Write more about side you agree with
5. Conclusion – sum up, suggestions, solutions.

Plan for Situation topic type (5 paragraphs)

1. Introduction – define the situation
2. Write about reason # 1 for the situation
3. Write about reason # 2 for the situation
4. Write about reason # 3 for the situation
5. Conclusion – sum up, suggestions, solutions.

Study Plan

All the tips I shared with you until now are priceless, but they will be worth even more if you use them while practicing. As I said before, there are those who study and don't pass, and there are those who don't study and pass. And then there are people like us – we study a little, and then ACE the IELTS!

My advice is: if you decided to take IELTS, give yourself a month of studying according to this plan and go ACE the IELTS right away! Don't wait, don't take long breaks between studying, give it your all – and the success will follow.

Follows suggested study plan for 21 days that should help you get the best IELTS score you can with your current level of English. All of IELTS tasks appear in equal proportion. You can change that by doing more of tasks you feel weak at and removing some (not all!) of tasks you feel strong at. Remember, it is important to practice in all the tasks and not concentrate just on the ones you fear most.

In this e-book I have included Writing 1 (letter) and Writing 2 (essay) tasks, interview questions, topic cards and themes for the Speaking test. Additional material for studying (audio files for the Listening test, texts for the Reading test, etc) can be found on the following very helpful internet sites:

For the Listening test

<http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/IELTS/> - take it online, or print the booklet

<http://www.esl-lab.com/> - for this one you will need Real Audio Player

<http://www.international.holmesglen.vic.edu.au> - download the sample, print booklet

http://esl.about.com/cs/toefl/a/a_ielts_2.htm

<http://www.aapress.com.au/ielts/english/dload.html> - great downloadable material

For the Reading test

<http://www.gday.ru/ielts/reading/generalreading/>

<http://www.gday.ru/ielts/reading/academicreading/>

http://www.ielts.org/lib/pdf/1969_IELTSappForm05.pdf

http://www.onestopenglish.com/Exams/pdfs/uffizi_reading.pdf

http://www.selfaccess.com/www/sa/sa/htm/sa_samples.php

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

http://international.holmesglen.vic.edu.au/ie_read.htm

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

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

<http://www.aapress.com.au/ielts/english/dload.html> - great downloadable material

And of course there are many others, just look up words “IELTS” and “forum” in any search engine. The internet moves so quickly, by the time you are reading this book there might be many new forums I never heard of. If you find them or my links are not good any more – please let me know, I will update them and you will receive a FREE up-to-date copy of this book.

Essential tips for IELTS General Training Module

Day	Tasks	Time	Remarks
1	Speaking Listening Writing 2 (type A)	30 minutes 30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
2	Writing 1 (Complaint) Listening Reading	30 minutes 30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
3	Speaking Listening Writing 2 (type S)	30 minutes 30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
4	Writing 1 (Request) Listening Reading	30 minutes 30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
5	Speaking Writing 2 (type A)	30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
6	Writing 1 (Business) Listening Reading	30 minutes 30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
7	Speaking Writing 2 (type S)	30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
8	Writing 1 (Job application) Listening Reading	30 minutes 30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
9	Speaking Listening Writing 2 (type A)	30 minutes 30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
10	Writing 1 (Personal) Reading Listening	30 minutes 60 minutes 30 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
11	Speaking Writing 2 (type S) Reading	30 minutes 40 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
12	Writing 1 (Complaint) Reading Listening	30 minutes 60 minutes 30 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
13	Speaking Listening Writing 2 (type A)	30 minutes 30 minutes 40 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
14	Writing 1 (Business) Reading	30 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks

Essential tips for IELTS General Training Module

15	<u>Full IELTS test:</u> Listening Reading Writing 1 Writing 2 Speaking	40 minutes 60 minutes 20 minutes 40 minutes 15 minutes	Don't take breaks, continue through the whole test
16	Listening Writing 2	30 minutes 40 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
17	Speaking Writing 2 (type S)	30 minutes 40 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
18	Writing 1 (Personal) Reading Speaking	20 minutes 60 minutes 30 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
19	Speaking Writing 1 (Business) Listening	30 minutes 20 minutes 30 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
20	Writing 2 (type A) Reading	40 minutes 60 minutes	Take 5-10 minutes break between tasks
21	<u>Full IELTS test:</u> Listening Reading Writing 1 Writing 2 Speaking	40 minutes 60 minutes 20 minutes 40 minutes 15 minutes	Don't take breaks, continue through the whole test