Grammar for IELTS Writing
a handbook

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Introduction

Hello! My name is David S. Wills and I'm an IELTS tutor from the United Kingdom. In this book, I aim to give an overview of important English language grammar to help you get through the IELTS writing exam. This is by no means an exhaustive text – for that you'd need a book with more than a thousand pages! However, I think it is a good basic guide to the most important grammar points needed for IELTS.

Grammar for IELTS Writing is intended as a handbook. That means it is for reference purposes. It is not a textbook, so there are no exercises to do. It contains essential information about the most important parts of English concerning IELTS candidates, and is structured from basic to advanced. If you read the whole of this book and apply its lessons to your writing, you will be on course for a high band score in the IELTS writing exam.

I really hope that you enjoy this book, as I have spent more than a year writing it. If you liked it, you can leave a review online, as it will greatly help me. Please feel free to contact me at david@ted-ielts.com and check www.ted-ielts.com for more free IELTS lessons. (Teachers, please go to www.ielts-teaching.com.)

CHAPTER

1

Parts of Speech

Introduction

One of the key IELTS skills that all students know is that you need a large vocabulary. But how do you learn new words? Most importantly, you don't learn them in isolation. You learn collocations, which means *how words work together*. You need to learn how to use a word or else knowing it is useless. Thus, it is essential that you know the different parts of speech in order to succeed in IELTS.

Through this book, I will talk about verbs and nouns, adverbs and adjectives, and prepositions and conjunctions. These are some of the parts of speech that make up the English language, and it is important that you know what the words mean. Therefore, in this first chapter, I will explain the parts of speech so that you can understand the book better. If you already know this stuff extensively, you may skip this chapter and begin with Chapter Two.

The 8 Parts of Speech

In the English language, all words can be broken down into eight categories. They are:

1. nouns
2. verbs
3. adjectives
4. adverbs
5. prepositions
6. conjunctions
7. pronouns
8. interjections

Some people argue that articles (a/an/the) are a separate category called articles or determiners; however, you can include these as a sort of adjective. In most textbooks, they list 8 parts of speech, so that's what we will use here to avoid confusion.

We will look at these in more depth after we ask an important question:

Why Learn Parts of Speech for IELTS?

In order to do well in IELTS, you need to have a good knowledge of English. That's pretty obvious, right? But how can you know the language well unless you know its basic structure? If you want to learn new words, you need to know how to use them. You should know some really basic things like:

▶ adjectives add detail to nouns
▶ adverbs give more information about verbs
▶ pronouns replace nouns

It is tremendously important that you understand these basics so that you can then develop more advanced skills. In English, we have a saying:

"You need to walk before you can run."

This is true of language, too. If you want to speak English at an IELTS 7 level, you have to work your way up from the basics. I often tell my students that they

need to master the simple sentence before they can try the complex sentence. Even when you get to the more advanced grammatical structures, you should be thinking in terms of parts of speech.

Let's take the IELTS reading exam for an example. If you are reading a passage about trees and you come to the phrase "deciduous trees," how can parts of speech help you? Well, "trees" is, of course, a noun. Clearly, "deciduous" is giving some information about the tree. Therefore, it is an adjective. We can then start to work out that "deciduous" must be a kind of tree and look for clues in the text as to what exactly a deciduous tree is. When we produce English for the speaking and writing exams, we can take model language and build it up similarly so that the production of language feels natural. For example, adjectives usually appear before the noun they describe.

Looking at the Parts of Speech

Let's now take each of the 8 parts of speech in turn and explore its meaning.

Noun

Definition:	A person, place, idea, or thing
Example:	France, a mountain, Steven, sheep, socialism
Sentences:	*The moon is bright.*
	John is reading that book.

Pronoun

Definition:	A pronoun replaces a noun. Sometimes this is done to avoid repetition.
Example:	he, his, her, I, we
Sentences:	*They wanted us to go with them.*
	He asked her to the dance but she said no.

Adjective

Definition: An adjective describes, changes, or gives extra information about a noun or pronoun.

Example: long, high, red, fast, British, angry

Sentences: *The tall man looked at the beautiful woman.*
The slow car stopped by the big supermarket.

Note:

There are different kinds of adjectives:

1. Descriptive (ie. difficult, cheap)
2. Proper (ie. Japanese, Italian)
3. Quantitative (ie. some, many)

and so on…

Adverb

Definition: An adverb describes a verb, adjective, or even another adverb. They often end in "-ly".

Example: quickly, silently, cunningly, amusingly, frankly, eventfully, coyly

Sentences: *She quickly ran out to get help.*
He drove carefully to the village.

Verb

Definition: A verb is usually an action, but may also indicate a state of being.

Examples: think, run, dance, sing, believe

Sentences: *He studies English so he can go to America.*
They think they can beat their rivals.

Conjunction

Definition:	A conjunction joins two words or groups of words, and can connect clauses.
Examples:	and, but, or, yet
Sentences:	*They want to go skiing, but it's too expensive.*
	She ate ice cream and cake for dessert.

Preposition

Definition:	Shows the relationship between a noun (or pronoun) and another word.
Examples:	on, at, in, from, about
Sentences:	*The keys are on the table.*
	She sat near the door.

Interjection

Definition:	A word or phrase that expresses emotion.
Examples:	wow, ah, watch out, ouch
Sentences:	*Ouch! That hurt!*
	Wow! That was amazing!

Building Sentences with Parts of Speech

Of course, the purpose of knowing these parts of speech is to better understand language. They can help you to decode what a sentence means, but they can also help you to produce better sentences. The purpose of this book is to help you build your language to the level of IELTS 7 or above, and knowing the parts of speech is fundamental.

At its most basic, a sentence can sometimes be one word, like an **interjection** or a **verb**:

verb	interjection
"Run!"	"Hey!"

However, to make a proper sentence requires at least a **noun** and a **verb** that express a complete thought or idea:

noun	verb
Frank	reads.

We can add **verbs** or **nouns** for more <u>specific meaning</u>, or replace the noun with a pronoun to avoid repetition:

pronoun	verb	noun
He	likes	computers.

noun	verb	verb
Paul	was	working.

Adverbs and **adjectives** can alter **verbs** and **nouns** to give our language more color:

noun	verb	adjective	noun
Peter	has	nice	parents.

noun	verb	noun	adverb
Sally	plays	piano	beautifully.

Prepositions give us more information about where or when something happens:

pronoun	verb	preposition	determiner*	noun	adverb
She	walked	to	the	shop	slowly.

(*remember that a **determiner** or **article** is another part of speech, sometimes considered an adjective)

Conjunctions allow us to add multiple clauses into a sentence:

pron.	verb	adj.	noun	conjunction	pron.	verb	pron.
They	like	noisy	cars	but	I	hate	them.

Final Note on Parts of Speech

You should use your dictionary to find out the correct part of speech for a word when studying. Keep in mind that some words may be classified as more than one part of speech. For example, "work" can be both a verb and a noun:

- ▶ *I went to work yesterday.* (noun)
- ▶ *I was working yesterday.* (verb)

CHAPTER

2

Present Tenses

Take a piece of paper and draw two lines through the middle – one from top to bottom and the other from left to right. You end up with a grid split into four sections:
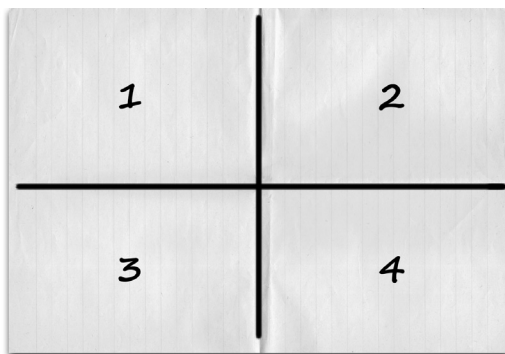
You are going to write one sentence in each square describing:

1. Something you do every day.
2. Something you are doing right now.
3. Something you did in the past at an unspecified time.
4. Something you started in the past that you are still doing now.

Here are my examples:

1. *I eat breakfast every day.*
2. *I'm looking at a computer screen right now.*
3. *I have swum with sharks.*
4. *I have been living in Asia for ten years.*

Those are the four present tenses in English.

What are Tenses?

We say that there are 12 tenses in English. They are divided up like this:

- ▶ 3 times: past, present, future
- ▶ 4 aspects: simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous

If you want to do well in IELTS, it's really important to know these tenses. However, if you find some of them very difficult, don't worry. It has been estimated that present simple and past simple make up 80% of the language. In IELTS you will commonly be asked about your past, the present, and only some basic plans for the future, so you don't need to know all the tenses *perfectly*.

Here's a table explaining how the tenses look:

	Past	Present	Future
Simple	I ate chocolate yesterday.	I eat chocolate every day.	I will eat chocolate tomorrow.
Continuous	I was eating chocolate when I saw her.	I'm eating chocolate right now.	I will be eating chocolate when we meet.
Perfect	I had eaten the chocolate when you got there.	I have eaten all of the chocolate.	I will have eaten all of the chocolate by the time you see me.
Perfect Continuous	I had been eating chocolate for two hours by then.	I have been eating chocolate for two hours.	I will have been eating chocolate for two hours.

Now let's look at the present tenses.

Present Simple

In any of the tenses, you can form positive, negative, or interrogative (a question) sentences.

Positive	Negative	Question
I talk.	I **do not talk**.	**Do** I **talk**?
You talk.	You **do not talk**.	**Do** you **talk**?
We talk.	We **do not talk**.	**Do** we **talk**?
They talk.	They **do not talk**.	**Do** they **talk**?
He talks.	He **does not talk**.	**Does** he **talk**?
She talks.	She **does not talk**.	**Does** she **talk**?
It talks.	It **does not talk**.	**Does** it **talk**?

Note that in written English, we usually write "do not" and "does not." However, in spoken English, this is contracted to "don't" and "doesn't." In the IELTS exam, you should try to follow this rule.

When to Use Present Simple

The present simple is a very common tense and it has many uses. Here are some of them:

1. Routine actions:
   - ▶ *He goes to the market every weekend.*
   - ▶ *We ride our bikes to school.*

2. Facts and permanent situations
   - ▶ *The sky is blue.*
   - ▶ *The sun rises in the east.*

3. Directions or instructions
   - ▶ *Turn right at the corner and walk for fifty meters.*
   - ▶ *Open the box and then remove the plastic.*

Third Person Singular

When using the third person singular – meaning he/she/it – you must add an "-s" to the end of the verb. However, there are a few rules about that.

Generally, you just add "-s" to the end of the base form of the verb:
- Walks
- Talks
- Sits
- Eats
- Finds

If the verb ends in a "-y" you should remove the "y" and replace it with an "i," before adding "-es".
- Cry → Cries
- Try → Tries
- Fry → Fries
- Hurry → Hurries
- Bury → Buries

If the verb ends in one of the following cake, you should instead add "-es" to the end: *o, s, z, x, ch,* and *sh.*
- Watch → Watches
- Fix → Fixes
- Mix → Mixes
- Wash → Washes
- Go → Goes

When the third person singular is used with an auxiliary verb (do), as in the negative or interrogative form, the auxiliary takes the "-s" and so the main verb doesn't need it.
- ~~Does he walks?~~
- Does he walk?
- ~~He doesn't walks.~~
- He doesn't walk.

Present Continuous

The present continuous is sometimes called the present progressive; however, as most textbooks refer to it as the continuous, I will use that term here. It is formed by using "to be" and then verb +ing:

Positive	Negative	Question
I am singing.	I **am not singing**.	**Am** I **singing**?
You are singing.	You **are not singing**.	**Are** you **singing**?
We are singing.	We **are not singing**.	**Are** we **singing**?
They are singing.	They **are not singing**.	**Are** they **singing**?
He is singing.	He **is not singing**.	**Is** he **singing**?
She is singing.	She **is not singing**.	**Is** she **singing**?
It is singing.	It **is not singing.**	**Is** it **singing**?

Again, be careful of contractions. In writing, we would say "are not" but in spoken English, it is more common to use "aren't."

When to Use Present Continuous

There are many times when we could use the present continuous. Here are some of the common instances:

1. For an action that is happening as we speak
   a. *I'm doing some housework.*
   b. *She's talking with that man.*
2. For something that is ongoing but not necessarily happening right now
   a. *I'm reading a book called* On the Road.
   b. *They're studying to be doctors.*
3. To describe a developing situation
   a. *It's getting dark outside.*
   b. *The weather is turning cold.*
4. Referring to a regular action
   a. *He's usually working at this time.*
   b. *We're normally on our way home by now.*

A Note on Use

Numbers 1 and 2 from the list above often confuse students. The first one is straightforward. "I'm reading a book," could mean that I'm holding a book and actively reading it at the moment of speaking. However, if I read a book every night before bed, I may also say, "I'm reading a book."

Think of it this way: Imagine you're sitting at dinner with a friend and talking about your life. You haven't seen each other in a while, so you want to catch up with some general information about your lives. You tell her some things about yourself:

▶ *I'm not studying to be a vet anymore.*
▶ *I changed my major and now I'm studying to be a dentist!*
▶ *My brother is going to night school to train for a new position at his job.*
▶ *I'm reading a really wonderful self-help book.*

All of these are true and all of them use the present continuous, and yet none of the activities described are happening *right this now*.

Non-Continuous Verbs

It may sound like you can describe any action with the present continuous, but this isn't true. There are actually many non-continuous verbs. These are generally verbs that describe states or feelings – the sort of things you can't really see someone do. They include:

▶ prefer, hate wish, love, remember, believe, imagine, know

For example, a person might say:
▶ *I believe in God.*

However, they can't say:
▶ *~~I'm believing in God.~~*

Present Perfect

The next present tense is the perfect. As we saw in the main verb tense table above, it is formed with "have" or "has" and the past participle form of the verb.

Positive	Negative	Question
I have visited Paris.	I **have not visited Paris**.	**Have** I **visited Paris**?
You have visited Paris.	You **have not visited Paris**.	**Have** you **visited Paris**?
We have visited Paris.	We **have not visited Paris**.	**Have** we **visited Paris**?
They have visited Paris.	They **have not visited Paris**.	**Have** they **visited Paris**?
He has visited Paris.	He **has not visited Paris**.	**Has** he **visited Paris**?
She has visited Paris.	She **has not visited Paris**.	**Has** she **visited Paris**?
It has visited Paris.	It **has not visited Paris**.	**Has** it **visited Paris**?

When to Use Present Perfect

The present perfect can be a little trickier than other present tenses, so let's look closely at three of its uses.

1. A finished action or state that occurred at an indefinite time in the past.
   - ▶ *I have been to France.*
   - ▶ *She has eaten sushi.*
   - ▶ *They have learned Chinese.*

Each of these actions occurred but we don't state exactly *when* they occurred. This use is very common but also quite vague. It could refer to an isolated event that is either long or short, or something that happened repeatedly, or something that was true over a long period of time. Basically, it refers to something that definitely has happened and no particular time is stated.

2. Something that has happened in the past but may happen again in the future because the time period is not yet finished.
   - ▶ *It has rained today.*
   - ▶ *She has had four coffees this morning.*
   - ▶ *They have been to the office twice this afternoon.*

In each of these situations, there is a time period that is still continuing (today, this morning, this afternoon) and although the actions have already occurred, they may be repeated again. For example, in the first sentence, it has already rained but it might rain again.

3. Similar to the previous rule, present perfect can also be used for events that started in the past and may or may not be continued into the future.
    ▶ *We've lived in Beijing for six years.*
    ▶ *They've been a couple since 2012.*
    ▶ *I've worked in finance for almost a decade.*

Notice the use of "since" and "for." We often use these with the present perfect. "For" is followed by a period of time ("for five months"; "for two days" etc) and "since" is used to refer to a point in time ("since last Friday"; "since 1998").

Present Perfect Continuous

As the name suggests, this tense includes elements of the perfect and continuous tenses. Namely, it includes both "have" or "has" and the past participle "been" plus the verb +ing. It looks like this:

Positive	Negative	Question
I have been studying.	I **have not been studying**.	**Have** I **been studying**?
You have been studying.	You **have not been studying**.	**Have** you **been studying**?
We have been studying.	We **have not been studying**.	**Have** we **been studying**?
They have been studying.	They **have not been studying**.	**Have** they **been studying**?
He has been studying.	He **has not been studying**.	**Has** he **been studying**?
She has been studying.	She **has not been studying**.	**Has** she **been studying**?
It has been studying.	It **has not been studying**.	**Has** it **been studying**?

How to Use Present Perfect Continuous

This tense is less common than the previous three and has a more specific application.

1. For describing an ongoing activity and the length of time that it has continued.
   - ▶ *I've been learning Spanish for six months.*
   - ▶ *We've been dating for two years.*
   - ▶ *They've been caring for that sick dog since last Monday.*

2. It is used with the present simple to explain the current situation.
   - ▶ *I'm tired because I've been looking after the baby all day.*
   - ▶ *She's hungry because she's been dieting recently.*
   - ▶ *We're broke because we've been spending too much money.*

Past Tenses

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we briefly looked at what tenses are and then explored the present tenses of the English language. In this chapter, we will look into the past tenses.

As with the present, there are four aspects to the past tense in English, and each can be divided into positive, negative, and question forms. They look like this:

Tense	Positive	Negative	Question
Past simple:	I walked.	I didn't walk.	Did I walk?
Past continuous:	I was walking.	I wasn't walking.	Was I walking?
Past perfect:	I had walked.	I hadn't walked.	Had I walked?
Past perfect continuous:	I had been walking.	I hadn't been walking.	Had I been walking?

Let's look at each tense in turn.

Past Simple

This is a really common and basic part of the English language, and knowledge of it is essential to IELTS success. Generally speaking, we form the past simple by adding "-ed" to a verb. However, in English, there are hundreds of irregular verbs. So, whereas you might say "I walked" or "She watched," there are also cases like "We ate" or "They wrote" for which you simply need to remember the correct past form. Here is an example using an irregular verb:

Positive	Negative	Question
I ran.	I **did not run**.	**Did** I **run**?
You ran.	You **did not run**.	**Did** you **run**?
We ran.	We **did not run**.	**Did** we **run**?
They ran.	They **did not run**.	**Did** they **run**?
He ran.	He **did not run**.	**Did** he **run**?
She ran.	She **did not run**.	**Did** she **run**?
It ran.	It **did not run**.	**Did** it **run**?

When to Use Past Simple

1. An action that was completed in the past.
   - ▶ *I graduated in 2007.*
   - ▶ *She left home two years ago.*

2. Routine actions in the past.
   - ▶ *We called her every day.*
   - ▶ *He spoke with his grandmother often.*

Past Continuous

Like the present continuous, the past continuous is formed using "to be" with "verb +ing". However, as this is a past tense, "to be" is changed into the past ("was" or "were") while the present participle ("verb +ing") remains.

Positive	Negative	Question
I was cleaning.	I **was not cleaning**.	**Was** I **cleaning**?
You were cleaning.	You **were not cleaning**.	**Were** you **cleaning**?
We were cleaning.	We **were not cleaning**.	**Were** we **cleaning**?
They were cleaning.	They **were not cleaning**.	**Were** they **cleaning**?
He was cleaning.	He **was not cleaning**.	**Was** he **cleaning**?
She was cleaning.	She **was not cleaning**.	**Was** she **cleaning**?
It was cleaning.	It **was not cleaning.**	**Was** it **cleaning**?

When to Use Past Continuous

There are three uses that all suggest an act that was ongoing for a period of time.

1. Describing a past action during a particular period of time (that may have continued after that period of time).
   ▶ *We were walking our dogs last night.*
   ▶ *I was brushing my teeth at ten o'clock.*

2. It describes a longer action that is interrupted by a shorter action.
   ▶ *I was washing the dishes when I cut my hand.*
   ▶ *She was driving to work when the accident happened.*

3. An action interrupted by another action.
   ▶ *They were listening to music when the doorbell rang.*
   ▶ *It was sleeping when the fireworks started.*

Past Perfect

While the present perfect uses "has" or "have," the past perfect simply uses "had" with the past participle of the main verb.

Positive	Negative	Question
I had eaten.	I **had not eaten**.	**Had** I **eaten**?
You had eaten.	You **had not eaten**.	**Had** you **eaten**?
We had eaten.	We **had not eaten**.	**Had** we **eaten**?
They had eaten.	They **had not eaten**.	**Had** they **eaten**?
He had eaten.	He **had not eaten**.	**Had** he **eaten**?
She had eaten.	She **had not eaten**.	**Had** she **eaten**?
It had eaten.	It **had not eaten**.	**Had** it **eaten**?

When to Use Past Perfect

The past perfect is used to refer to an event or action that took place prior to the time period considered. Therefore, in the examples above, the conversation would revolve around an event that took place in the past, but the eating took place before that. For example:

A: *Do you remember last year when we first arrived at the hotel?*

B: *Yes, I remember. Oddly enough, I recall being very hungry!*

A: *Well, **you had not eaten** for hours.*

In this case, we use the past perfect to show that the eating took place (or in this case, *didn't* take place) before the arrival at the hotel.

Here are some more related uses:

1. Describing repeated or extended situations
   - *We had lived in that house for six years.*
   - *By then, they had studied for a long time.*

2. To explain a situation
   - *I wasn't afraid because I had expected the worst.*
   - *He felt confident because he had already prepared.*

Past Perfect Continuous

The past perfect continuous is essentially the same as the present perfect continuous except that the point of reference is in the past.

Positive	Negative	Question
I had been searching.	I **had not been searching**.	**Had** I **been searching**?
You had been searching.	You **had not been searching**.	**Had** you **been searching**?
We had been searching.	We **had not been searching**.	**Had** we **been searching**?
They had been searching.	They **had not been searching**.	**Had** they **been searching**?
He had been searching.	He **had not been searching**.	**Had** he **been searching**?
She had been searching.	She **had not been searching**.	**Had** she **been searching**?
It had been searching.	It **had not been searching**.	**Had** it **been searching**?

When to Use Past Perfect Continuous

This tense describes an action that occurred further back in time than the other events, but that overlaps them.

- ▶ *They had been studying for several hours when the phone rang.*
- ▶ *She had been working in a hospital before the war began.*

Past Tenses for IELTS Writing Task 1

Not only is the past simple incredibly common in everyday speech, but it is also very useful for the writing exam. In particular, in task 1 you will mostly be using the past simple to describe details in a graph or table because they will likely feature dates that are from the past. Here are some examples:

- ▶ Prices **rose** in the first quarter.
- ▶ The interest rate **went up** between 1999 and 2001.
- ▶ French people **consumed** more wine than Italian people during the period.
- ▶ In 1860, the population **stood** at four million.

You may also use the past perfect in order to explain relationships between points in time with greater clarity. As we discussed previously in the past perfect section, this tense shows an action that occurred prior to another action in the past. Here are some examples:

- ▶ After it **had risen** to forty-six, the total volume then dropped to thirty-eight.
- ▶ Sales returned to a higher level after they **had fallen** to just six thousand.

The other past tenses are not particularly useful in the IELTS writing exam, but can greatly improve the accuracy of your overall English. Therefore, they may come in useful for other parts of the IELTS exam.

C H A P T E R

4

Future Tenses

Introduction

Finally, we come to the future tenses. Talking about the future tends to be more complicated than the past or present, at least in regards knowing when to use it, but thankfully it's also less important for IELTS. This is because some future tenses have really limited uses and appear infrequently in our language. Look at the table below and consider how often in the IELTS exam you would ever need to say, "I won't have been going." It very rarely comes up. However, proficiency in these tenses generally shows a higher level of English and can, therefore, be used in attaining higher band levels for the speaking and, perhaps, the writing task 2.

Although they can be difficult to know when to use, these tenses are actually quite easy to form. Looking through the examples below, you can see how little the structure changes. While in the present continuous we say "I am going" and "She is going," in the future continuous it's just "I will be going" and "She will be going." Likewise for the perfect tenses: "I have eaten" and "She has eaten" become "I will have eaten" and "She will have eaten."

Let's start with an overview of the tenses as we did with past and present:

Tense	Positive	Negative	Question
Future simple:	I will go.	I won't go.	Will I go?
Future continuous:	I will be going.	I won't be going.	Will I be going?
Future perfect:	I will have gone.	I won't have gone.	Will I have gone?
Future perfect continuous:	I will have been going.	I won't have been going.	Will I have been going?

Future Simple

The future simple is formed with "will" and the base form of the main verb. To make it negative, you can change it to "will not," which is usually abbreviated to "won't." As the future tense is most likely to be used in the speaking exam, I'll include "won't" below. We also very commonly contract "will" to "'ll." For example, "I'll" and "She'll."

Positive	Negative	Question
I will cook.	I won't cook.	Will I cook?
You will cook.	You won't cook.	Will you cook?
We will cook.	We won't cook.	Will we cook?
They will cook.	They won't cook.	Will they cook?
He will cook.	He won't cook.	Will he cook?
She will cook.	She won't cook.	Will she cook?
It will cook.	It won't cook.	Will it cook?

When to Use Future Simple

The future simple is used for most events or actions taking place in the future.

- ▶ *The president will visit Paris next year for a peace conference.*
- ▶ *They will celebrate their fourth anniversary in December.*

Future Continuous

As with the past and present continuous forms, the future continuous also includes "to be" and verb +ing.

Positive	Negative	Question
I will be waiting.	I won't be waiting.	Will I be waiting?
You will be waiting.	You won't be waiting.	Will you be waiting?
We will be waiting.	We won't be waiting.	Will we be waiting?
They will be waiting.	They won't be waiting.	Will they be waiting?
He will be waiting.	He won't be waiting.	Will he be waiting?
She will be waiting.	She won't be waiting.	Will she be waiting?
It will be waiting.	It won't be waiting.	Will it be waiting?

When to Use Future Continuous

The future continuous describes an on-going action in the future.

- ▶ *He will be running for president in next year's election.*
- ▶ *We will be eating those vegetables tomorrow night.*

Future Perfect

The future perfect uses "will have" and the past participle.

Positive	Negative	Question
I will have finished.	I won't have finished.	Will I have finished?
You will have finished.	You won't have finished.	Will you have finished?
We will have finished.	We won't have finished.	Will we have finished?
They will have finished.	They won't have finished.	Will they have finished?
He will have finished.	He won't have finished.	Will he have finished?
She will have finished.	She won't have finished.	Will she have finished?
It will have finished.	It won't have finished.	Will it have finished?

When to Use Future Perfect

The future perfect refers to a point in time by which an action will be finished. As such, it is often used together with an expression that indicates the time.

- ▶ *By the time you get home from work, I will have fallen asleep.*
- ▶ *She will have gone to work before then.*

Future Perfect Continuous

Perhaps the least common of our 12 tenses is the future perfect. It uses "will have been" and the present participle.

Positive	Negative	Question
I will have been learning.	I won't have been learning.	Will I have been learning?
You will have been learning.	You won't have been learning.	Will you have been learning?
We will have been learning.	We won't have been learning.	Will we have been learning?
They will have been learning.	They won't have been learning.	Will they have been learning?
He will have been learning.	He won't have been learning.	Will he have been learning?
She will have been learning.	She won't have been learning.	Will she have been learning?
It will have been learning.	It won't have been learning.	Will it have been learning?

When to Use Future Perfect Continuous

This tense is used to speak about a point in the future when an action will have been taking place but is not yet finished. It is quite commonly used with "for" to highlight the period of time that the action has been taking place. It may also be used with a marker for the time that is being referred to.

- ▶ *I will have been studying for five years by the time I graduate.*
- ▶ *She will have been working for forty-eight hours by the time she finally stops.*

Other Ways to Talk About the Future

We can sometimes use the **present simple** to talk about future events. As strange as that sounds to non-native speakers, it really is true! If an event occurs regularly, we may use the present simple to talk about it. This is the case for movie showings, TV schedules, and transportation timetables. If one of these things occurs at a set time in the future, you may be able to refer to it with the present simple:

- ▶ *The movie starts at 9 pm.*
- ▶ *Our bus leaves at 7:30 am.*

We can use another present tense to talk about *personal arrangements* that are set for the *near future*. The **present continuous** is really common in spoken English for this reason:

- ▶ *I'm meeting my brother after school.*
- ▶ *We're playing golf this weekend.*

Finally, we can use **going to + verb** to express intentions for the future. It indicates that something has already been planned (or at least thought about) and that it will very likely take place in the future.

- ▶ *She's going to learn French next month.*
- ▶ *We're going to visit my brother in Washington.*

A Final Note on the Future Tenses

In most cases, it can be quite easy to figure out what someone means when they talk about the future, but actually speaking about the future can be more challenging. This is because the differences can be quite subtle. Take predictions for example. You quite often deal with predictions in the IELTS exam, and so this is important. If you have some sort of evidence to back up your prediction, you should use **going to**, but if you have no evidence, you would use **will** instead. It can be confusing! Fortunately, even native speakers bend the rules when it comes to tenses (not just for the future) and so using "will" where "going to" should be used is not a major problem.

CHAPTER

5

Sentence Types

There are four types of sentence in English: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. In this chapter, we will learn how to form each of them. First, however, we must look at clauses. There are essentially two kinds of clauses: independent and dependent.

Independent Clauses

An independent clause must have three elements:

- ▶ A subject
- ▶ A verb
- ▶ A complete thought

It is relatively easy to understand those first two, but how do you know whether or not a clause contains a complete thought? In fact, that is not so difficult. If it contains a complete thought, the sentence alone can be completely understood. In other words, no extra information is necessary.

Let's look at some examples:

- ▶ *Sally sings.*
- ▶ *She loves you.*
- ▶ *We are going to the mall this weekend.*

In the first example, there are only two words! This is a little unusual, but it goes to show that an independent clause can consist of nothing more than the subject and verb, and yet contain a complete thought. Nothing else is needed. If I told you, "Sally sings," you may have extra questions, but you get my meaning.

Dependent Clauses

On the other hand, dependent clauses do not contain a complete thought. This is because they almost always begin with a subordinator. A subordinator makes this clause less important to the meaning of the whole sentence, and therefore it must be attached to an independent clause to be fully understood. "Subordinate" means "less important" and some people call these subordinate clauses for that reason.

Take a look at this clause:

- ▶ *because he wanted to find out the answer.*

Here, "because" is a subordinator. Alone, this could not function as a sentence. It would be called a sentence fragment, meaning that it is only part of an idea. Instead, we need to add it to an independent clause:

- ▶ *Allen went to the teacher's office because he wanted to find out the answer.*

If I told you, "Allen went to the teacher's office," you would be able to understand me. It is a completely self-contained idea, and therefore it is able to function as a sentence. However, it is possible to add more information. In this case, we have added a dependent clause. The dependent clause could not function alone because if I said to you "because he wanted to find out an answer," you simply could not understand my whole meaning.

Here are some common subordinators:

▶ After	▶ Though
▶ Although	▶ Unless
▶ Because	▶ What
▶ Before	▶ When
▶ Even though	▶ Where
▶ If	▶ Which
▶ Since	▶ While
▶ That	▶ Who

Simple Sentences

A simple sentence is just one independent clause by itself. It may have one subject and one verb, or several subjects and several verbs.

- ▶ Rain falls from the sky.
- ▶ Susie and Karen play basketball on weekends.
- ▶ I like eating fast food.
- ▶ She went to the park yesterday.
- ▶ They were last seen six days ago.

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence is made up of two (or more) independent clauses. They may be joined by:

- ▶ a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS*)
  I like tea, but I prefer coffee.

- ▶ a semi-colon
  I like tea; I prefer coffee.

- ▶ a semi-colon and a conjunctive adverb.
  I like tea; however, I prefer coffee.

*FANBOYS is an pneumonic device to help you remember the coordinating conjunctions: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.

Complex Sentences

A complex sentence has one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.

The two clauses will be joined by a subordinator (although, because, since, as) or relative pronoun (who, which, that).

▶ *Although it was raining, I walked to work.*

In this example, "although" is the subordinator and thus "Although it was raining" is a dependent clause.

In a complex sentence, you can put the dependent clause first or second. It really doesn't matter; however, you should be careful with the punctuation. If the dependent clause goes first in a sentence, it should be followed by a comma. If the independent clause comes first, no comma is needed:

▶ *Although it was raining, I walked to work.*
▶ *I walked to work although it was raining.*

The formula looks like this:

independent clause + dependent clause

or

dependent clause + comma + independent clause

= complex **sentence**

You can drop the dependent clause, but you cannot drop the independent one.

▶ *I walked to work.*
▶ ~~*Although it was raining.*~~

The first example is now a **simple sentence**, but the second is a **sentence fragment**. Any single clause beginning with a **subordinator** is a fragment. This is a big mistake, and you should try to avoid it in your IELTS writing.

Subordinate clause is another way of saying **dependent clause**. Subordinate means that a clause is less important than the main clause.

Look at these two **simple sentences**:

▶ *I was tired. I went to the shop.*

Now look at this **compound sentence**:

▶ *I was tired but I went to the shop.*

In each case, the sentences have equal meaning. They are equally important. In a complex sentence, however, one clause is more important and one is less important.

▶ *Although I was tired, I went to the shop.*

Now the reader knows which part of the sentence is the main idea – "I went to the shop."

Compound-Complex Sentences

As the name suggests, this type of sentence is a mix of compound and complex sentences. It must have at least two independent clauses, and one dependent clause, meaning it has at least three clauses. We use the same conjunctions (sub-ordinators or FANBOYS) to join the different parts; however, the clauses could go in any order.

▶ *The dog barked loudly, and she ran all around the room as her owner tried to relax with his newspaper.*
▶ *The scouts did not think they'd make it to the destination because it was so far away, and they were exhausted from the long journey.*

Note the conjunctions above. They are used just the same as in complex or compound sentences.

Grammar for IELTS Writing

Review

There are four types of sentence in English:

Simple
▶ *We play football.*

Compound
▶ *We play football, and they play rugby.*

Complex
▶ *We play football when we're not busy at school.*

Compound-complex
▶ *We play football if it's sunny, and sometimes we play tennis.*

CHAPTER

6

Clauses

Before reading this section, make sure you fully understand the parts of speech (chapter one) and sentence types (chapter five).

Noun Clauses

To put it as simply as possible, a noun clause is a clause that replaces a noun in a sentence. But perhaps it is better to think of it as replacing a subject, object, or complement instead.

Look at this sentence:

We can eat pizza.

What's the subject? We.
What's the object? Pizza.

Now look at this sentence:

We can eat whatever you want.

In this case, the object has been replaced by a noun clause. Instead of saying "pizza" we are saying that we can eat whatever the listener wants to eat. The underlined phrase acts as a noun. More specifically, it is the object of the verb "eat".

Why do we Use Noun Clauses?

A noun clause takes the place of a subject, object, or complement because it expresses something that cannot be expressed by a single word noun or short noun phrase. The above example illustrates this perfectly. How could I express "whatever you want" in one single word?

Here's another example:

What she said inspired me to enroll in university.

Here, the noun clause is the subject of the sentence. It refers to something a woman has said to the speaker. There is no way we could capture that in a single word noun.

Let's take another example:

Steve Jobs was a genius.

In this sentence, "Steve Jobs" is the subject and "a genius" is the complement of the verb "was." However, I could replace the subject with a noun clause:

Whoever invented the iPhone was a genius.

Here, the subject is "whoever invented the iPhone". It suggests that we don't know who invented it. This uncertainty is also a reason why we may want to use a noun clause.

Noun clauses, then, are an integral part of the English language. They help us express ideas that are more complex than a more basic sentence would allow.

How to Recognize and Use Noun Clauses

If noun clauses act as a subject, object, or complement, then we should first look for the verb in a sentence and ask who is doing it, or what it is being done to. This can help us to locate the noun clause. Sometimes, though, we need to instead find the preposition, as a noun clause may function as the object of a preposition.

I wonder why she didn't come to work today.
You should think about what you want to do next year.

In the first sentence, "why she didn't come to work today" is the object of the verb "wonder". In the second, "what you want to do next year" is the object of the preposition "about".

You may also have noticed some similarities between the noun clauses given as examples. The two above use question words – "why" and "what" – at the beginning of the clause. This is one type of noun clause. Look for clauses beginning: who, what, where, when, why, how.

- ▶ *I know **why** you were angry.*
- ▶ *I know **how** you did it.*
- ▶ *I know **where** you were yesterday.*
- ▶ *I know **what** they will do.*
- ▶ *I know **who** will win the race.*
- ▶ *I know **when** she will arrive.*

There are also "-ever" clauses. Find words like "whoever," "whatever," and "wherever" to locate these clauses.

- ▶ *You can invite whoever you like.*
- ▶ *What you want to do is fine with me.*
- ▶ *We can meet wherever she wants.*

Next, there are clauses beginning "if" and "whether".

- ▶ *I wonder if they will call us tonight.*
- ▶ *Do you know whether he is still working for NASA?*

Finally, there is the "that" clause. This can be the most difficult to find because in English we commonly omit the word "that".

- ▶ *She always felt (that) she wasn't good enough.*
- ▶ *I know (that) you are angry with me.*
- ▶ *It seems (that) we are in a difficult situation.*
- ▶ *He believed (that) everything happens for a reason.*
- ▶ *My cousin told me (that) she's going to Germany for a semester.*

Adjective Clauses

Adjective clauses are a really important part of the English language, and mastering them can boost your IELTS writing score, improve your speaking accuracy, and even help improve your reading comprehension.

What are Adjective Clauses?

Look at this sentence and find the adjectives:

She looked sadly at the big, green, empty box.

The adjectives are: big, green, and empty. They describe the noun "box".

Adjectives give information about a noun and usually come directly in front of it. However, adjective clauses do the same but usually come right after the noun they describe.

Look at these two sentences and see how they could be condensed into a single sentence:

There is a man sitting in the corner. He is my brother.
The man who is sitting in the corner is my brother.

What is the adjective? It's the phrase "who is sitting in the corner".
What noun is it describing? "The man".

Adjective clauses are often referred to as "relative clauses" because they begin with relative pronouns or relative adverbs such as:

▶ Who   ▶ That
▶ Whom   ▶ When
▶ Whose   ▶ Where
▶ Where   ▶ Why
▶ Which

How does it Work?

Generally, an adjective clause will follow one of these patterns:
1. Relative pronoun/adverb + subject + verb
2. Relative pronoun (as subject) + verb

As a dependent clause, it needs to have both a subject (even if, as in #2, the subject is a relative pronoun) and a verb. It should modify a noun by adding extra information about it, being placed as close as possible to the noun. To understand what it means to "modify" the noun, think about questions that may be asked: Who? What? Where? When? How? etc.

Here are some examples:

▶ *Carol felt manipulated by her poodle, <u>whose big, black eyes pleaded for another snack</u>.*
▶ *Constantly talking with food in her mouth is one reason <u>why John cannot stand sitting near his sister</u>.*
▶ *Jane's two dogs competed for the ball <u>that bounced across the patio</u>.*
▶ *Laughter came from Susan, <u>who hiccupped for the next two hours</u>.*

Note that each of these clauses is a dependent clause and needs to be joined with an independent clause in order to function properly. Standing alone, they would be considered a sentence fragment – meaning it is not a good sentence.

What do the Relative Pronouns Mean?

Who – people as the subject of the clause
*The woman **who** teaches in the chemistry department is my mentor.*

Whom – people as objects or objects of the preposition
*John, **whom** I've known since primary school, is my closest friend.*
*The boy of **whom** we're discussing is from Slovakia.*

Which, that – things or animals
*The computer **that** I bought was very cheap.*
*The dog, **which** we adopted, has settled into our family.*

Whose – denotes ownership or possession
*The girl **whose** father is watching from the stands is winning the race.*

When – used to show the time (can sometimes be omitted)
*I'll never forget the time **when** I first met her.*
I'll never forget the time I first met her.

Where – marks place (can be omitted, but must be replaced by a preposition)
*The school **where** he teaches is very old.*
The school he teaches in is very old.

Why – shows a reason (can also be omitted)
*No one knows the reason **why** he skips school.*
No one knows the reason he skips school.

Essential Clauses

Commas often seem confusing, but they're really not hard to understand. (See the chapter on punctuation to find out more.) When it comes to adjective clauses, you need to consider the exact meaning of the sentence before you use a comma. Incorrect comma use can change the whole meaning!

Ask yourself if the information in the adjective clause is *essential* to understanding the noun, or if it is just *extra* information. If it is essential, then we call this an **essential clause**. If it is purely extra information to add more interest or flavor to the sentence, then it is a **non-essential clause**.

Essential clauses are not surrounded by commas:

▶ The girl **that spoke to us earlier** is my sister.
This is essential because otherwise we don't know which girl.
▶ The house **where I grew up** is near here.
This is essential because otherwise we don't know which house.

Non-essential clauses require commas around them:

▶ Fran, **who really likes dogs**, is getting a puppy this weekend.
The information in the clause is interesting but not necessary to understand the sentence.
▶ My cat, **who's always begging me for more food**, is getting really fat.

Again, the information is relevant, but it is not essential to understanding the main clause.

CHAPTER

7

Parallelism

Parallel means two things (lines, objects, etc.) running next to each other, having the same space between them at all points. For example, look at the word "parallel" itself – the two *l*s in the middle are parallel to one another. Remember the spelling of the word, and you can remember its meaning; remember the meaning of the word and you can remember its spelling! There aren't many words in English as convenient as that!

If two things are parallel, then we could consider them to be similar like objects in a mirror. Thus, parallelism in writing means parts of a sentence which have the same features.

Rules of Parallelism

There are a few important things to remember in parallelism, and they, fortunately, adhere to a few simple rules. Basically, when you are creating a list or

a comparison, you want to create balance and simplicity in the sentence by having all parts the same. That means:

1. Keep nouns with nouns

Example:
- ▶ Incorrect: *He enjoys football more than playing baseball.*
- ▶ Correct: *He enjoys football more than baseball.*

Why? In the first (incorrect) example, we have a noun (football) for the first part, and then a verb (playing baseball) for the second. We need to either make both parts nouns or both parts verbs.

2. Keep verbs with verbs, and keep them in the same tense

Example:
- ▶ Incorrect: *Last weekend we ran, swam, and went bowling.*
- ▶ Correct: *Last weekend we ran, swam, and bowled.*
- ▶ Correct: *Last weekend, we went running, swimming, and bowling.*

Why? In the incorrect example, we are mixing verb tenses. Although we have three verbs and no nouns or adjectives, it is important to keep the verbs in the same tense. In the second example, which is technically correct, we use the past simple (ran etc.) but it sounds a little weird. In the third example, we use past continuous, where the "-ing" form of all three verbs is the same.

3. Keep adjectives with adjectives

Example:
- ▶ Incorrect: *The movie was fascinating and informed me about a lot of things.*
- ▶ Correct: *The movie was fascinating and informative.*

Why? In the incorrect example, we mix adjective (fascinating) and verb (informed), whereas in the correct example we change to the adjective form (informative) so that we have two adjectives.

4. Articles and prepositions must apply to the first item in a list, or to all items

Example:

▶ Incorrect: *The Chinese, the Japanese, Koreans, and Mongolians all come from East Asia.*

▶ Correct: *The Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Mongolians all come from East Asia.*

▶ Incorrect: *He looked in the fridge, on the counter, and stovetop for his dinner.*

▶ Correct: *He looked in the fridge, on the counter, and on the stovetop for his dinner.*

Why? One of the important functions of parallelism is keeping a sentence logical and easy to understand. Switching from using articles and prepositions to not using them is confusing. We need to either use them with the first item in a list (such as in the first correct example above) or with all of them (such as in the second correct example).

An Extra Rule

This is not technically part of parallelism, but in parallelism, you might see a lot of commas used. I always use the Oxford Comma because it makes one's writing so much clearer and more logical. I highly recommend you use it, too.

When to Use Parallelism

Here I will explain some situations when we can employ the above four rules to make our writing better. These types of situation will arise in all sorts of writing, including – potentially – both tasks in the IELTS writing exam.

In pairs and lists

If you are using "or" or "and" to form a list of items or ideas, you should ensure that all items or ideas in the list are presented using the same or similar form.

Example:

▶ Incorrect: *He is good at studying history, English, and speaking French.*

▶ Incorrect: *He is good at studying history, in English class, and French.*

▶ Correct: *He is good at studying history, English, and French.*

Why? Hopefully, by now, we can see the problems with the first two examples. When you're making lists like this, and include multiple items or ideas, we have to watch out for mistakes like these.

In comparisons

Example:

▶ Incorrect: *Walking home is as fast as to drive.*

▶ Correct: *Walking home is as fast as driving.*

▶ Incorrect: *Buying an iPhone is almost as expensive as a new laptop.*

▶ Correct: *Buying an iPhone is almost as expensive as buying a new laptop.*

▶ Correct: *An iPhone is almost as expensive as a new laptop.*

Why? Make sure that the two things you're comparing (walking and driving; iPhones and laptops) are presented in the same way. This looks different from the list form previously explored, but the technique for fixing mistakes is just the same.

With paired words

Example:

▶ Incorrect: *Learning IELTS by watching TED videos is both interesting and a convenience.*

▶ Correct: *Learning IELTS by watching TED videos is both interesting and convenient.*

▶ Incorrect: *She said she'd prefer to work hard to learn English than failing her exam.*

▶ Correct: *She said she'd prefer to work hard to learn English than fail her exam.*

Why? Once again, we can see how different items in a sentence must be presented as parallels – i.e. with the same structure. With paired words we often see "and," "either," "rather," etc. used to join words or phrases. Make sure that these are the same; for example, in the first instance we needed two adjectives, and in the second we needed the verb tenses to be the same.

Why Use Parallelism in the IELTS?

The IELTS writing exam is a fantastic test of English proficiency. There is no way to cheat or trick the system. You simply have to demonstrate your English level by writing an honest piece of work. The examiner will mark you on the following criteria:

- ▶ task achievement
- ▶ coherence and cohesion
- ▶ lexical resource
- ▶ grammatical range and accuracy

The last point on the list is "grammatical range and accuracy." This means having a variety of sentence structures (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex) and a mastery of verb tenses. Parallelism is something that most students don't fully understand, yet it is not difficult to learn. I teach this to my students in one 90 minutes class, and by the end of the lesson, they understand it so well they are sick of my examples!

Like learning how to use a comma or semi-colon, it is not difficult, yet it is incredibly impressive. Your examiner will see your writing and mark you higher than other students on that basis.

Of course, like I said, there is no cheating the system – if all you know how to do is make your writing parallel and punctuated, it doesn't help. But it is a huge boost to your armory of English language skills and will be a pleasant surprise for the examiner.

Grammar for IELTS Writing

An IELTS Example of Parallelism

Let's look at an incorrect example from an IELTS Writing Task 1 essay:

> *As a general trend, the chart shows that while the unemployment rate in the United States gradually decreased over the period shown, in Japan there was a significant increase.*

Why is this incorrect? Because in the first part we use the phrase "gradually decreased" (an adverb + verb) and in the second we say "a significant increase" (adjective + noun). We should rephrase it to give parallelism thusly:

> *As a general trend, the chart shows that while the unemployment rate in the United States gradually decreased over the period shown, in Japan it significantly increased.*

Let's correct the following faulty parallelism from:

> *According to the data from the graph, in March 1993, 7% of Americans were unemployed, whereas the unemployment rate in Japan was just 2.4%.*

To:

> *According to the data from the graph, in March 1993, 7% of Americans were unemployed, whereas just 2.5% of Japanese were unemployed.*

CHAPTER

8

Punctuation

Punctuation is critically important in the IELTS writing exam. While having a truly advanced grasp of it may help you achieve band 7 or higher, just knowing the basics is vital to getting the score you really want. If you don't know how to use a comma or period, you certainly won't get more than a 5.0. Therefore, it is essential to study the rules below. Some of them, as you will, are less important than others. Make sure you at least know the basics before even thinking about sitting your first IELTS exam.

Many of the rules below correspond with sentence types, so ensure that you are familiar with Chapter Five of this book.

Comma

Use a comma when you need to join two independent clauses (in a compound sentence). However, you cannot just use a comma – you must also use a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS).

- ▶ *Those books were expensive, but they will be very useful.*
- ▶ *The storm last night was really wild, so I expect there will be some damage to the house.*

Use a comma after an introductory phrase or when a complex sentence begins with the dependent clause.

- ▶ *When the boys came home from school, they were always hungry.*
- ▶ *Long ago, we would go out on long drives together through the countryside.*

Use a comma to separate items in a series – i.e. a list. Remember to ALWAYS use the Oxford Comma.

- ▶ *I've been to Germany, France, Spain, and Italy.*
- ▶ *Our goals are customer satisfaction, innovation, and environmental protection.*

Separate non-essential information within a sentence by using commas.

- ▶ *Paul, whose father was the team's owner, always got picked first for big games.*
- ▶ *Sarah's new car, a pink Camry, was stolen last night.*

Coordinate adjectives (two adjectives which alter the same noun) should be separated by commas.

- ▶ *It was a bright, sunny day.*
- ▶ *The bulky, heavy box arrived yesterday.*

Use a comma after a conjunctive adverb or transitional element:

- ▶ *Peter got straight As in class; therefore, he was allowed to play video games.*
- ▶ *The company won approval for its new product; as a result, their share price soared.*

We use commas with quotes.

- ▶ *"Get out," she said.*
- ▶ *He looked at his manager despairingly and said, "Ok, I'll do it."*

Dates also require commas.

- ▶ *January 1st, 2016.*
- ▶ *May 15th, 2016.*

We use commas for qualifications and positions when describing people.

- ▶ *Judy Thomas, MD.*
- ▶ *Paul Harrison, CEO of Microcorp Tech.*

Finally, we use commas with places. Cities come before states or countries.

- ▶ *San Francisco, California.*
- ▶ *Paris, France.*

Comma Splice

Be careful to avoid a comma splice. This is a very comma error wherein two independent clauses are joined with a comma, like this:

- ▶ *The dog was hungry, he wanted some food.*

We can change it in a number of ways to make it correct.

- ▶ *The dog was hungry; he wanted some food.*
- ▶ *The dog was hungry. He wanted some food.*
- ▶ *The dog was hungry, so he wanted some food.*

Semi-Colon

As we saw in the above example, a semi-colon can be used to join two independent clauses in a compound sentence, if the meaning of the second clause is so close to that of the first that it basically restates the first clause.

- ▶ *The days were beginning to get shorter; it seemed the night got earlier and earlier.*
- ▶ *There was a big traffic jam; cars were barely moving around town.*

Again, in a compound sentence, if the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase, use a semi-colon.

- ▶ *The two countries had been at war for the previous decade; as a result, brokering peace would not be easy.*
- ▶ *The dog and cat lived together all their lives; however, they were certainly not friends.*

If individual items in a list are separated by commas, use semi-colons to break it up more clearly.

- ▶ *Important European capitals include Paris, France; Rome, Italy; and London, England.*

Period

The period comes only at the end of a sentence. Do not use a period after a dependent clause, or you will have a sentence fragment. Learn the sentence types:

- ▶ Simple
- ▶ Complex
- ▶ Compound
- ▶ Compound-complex

A period should always be followed by a capital letter.

Exclamation Mark

You should never use an exclamation mark in the IELTS exam!

CHAPTER

9

Register

To put it simply, register means how formal or informal your language is. For the academic IELTS exam, you should aim to write in a formal style, although it is still acceptable to speak somewhat informally during the speaking exam. In this chapter, we will examine what makes writing formal.

Passive Voice

Note that writing doesn't need to be passive, but that formal writing contains more passive voice use than informal writing, and so it has been grouped here under register.

What is Voice?

Voice refers to the relationship between subject and verb. In other words, is the subject doing the verb or is the verb being done to the subject? Fortunately, there are only two voices you need to remember: active and passive.

Active	Passive
The subject does the verb	The verb is done to the subject
"John kicked the ball."	"The ball was kicked by John."

Active Voice

The active voice is far more common than the passive voice. This is because it provides a simpler relationship between the different parts of a sentence. It is more logical and propels the reader through the sentence usually in a clear order.

Example:
▶ *The cat ate the mouse.*

Here, the subject ("the cat") does the verb ("ate") to an object ("the mouse"). However, the order can be inverted, resulting in the passive voice.

▶ *The mouse was eaten by the cat.*

In this case, the mouse is no longer the object of the sentence; it is the subject. However, the poor little mouse is still the recipient of the verb. It is still being eaten by the cat.

Passive Voice

In passive voice sentences, the verb is done to the subject of the sentence, as we just saw with the poor mouse. Let's look at some more examples:

▶ Active: *The poacher shot the tiger.*
▶ Passive: *The tiger was shot by the poacher.*
▶ Active: *The printer ate my paper.*
▶ Passive: *My paper was eaten by the printer.*

To form the passive, we simply take the object of the verb and turn it into a subject. In other words, the sentence is flipped backward. But not all sentences can be made into the passive. Intransitive verbs, for example, cannot be made passive. There are also some small changes that need to be made:

Let's take a simple, active sentence as an example:

▶ *Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa.*

To make this into a passive sentence, we must put the Mona Lisa first and da Vinci last. However, this would give us the following sentence:

▶ *~~The Mona Lisa painted Leonardo da Vinci.~~*

Did the Mona Lisa actually paint da Vinci? No… of course not! So we need a little more adjustment. First, we must add a form of the verb "to be" and change the main verb into the past participle. (In this case, it is already in its past participle form.)

▶ ~~The Mona Lisa was painted Leonardo da Vinci.~~

Finally, we add "by" before the person who actually did the action.

▶ *The Mona Lisa was painted by Leonardo da Vinci.*

Make sure you are familiar with the various forms of "to be" and change the tense accordingly:

Tense	Active Voice	Passive Voice
Present Simple	Frank bakes the cake.	The cake is baked by Frank.
Past Simple	Frank baked the cake.	The cake was baked by Frank.
Present Continuous	Frank is baking the cake.	The cake is being baked by Frank.
Present Perfect	Frank has baked the cake.	The cake has been baked by Frank.
Future (going to)	Frank is going to bake the cake.	The cake is going to be baked by Frank.
Future (will)	Frank will bake the cake.	The cake will be baked by Frank.
Past Continuous	Frank was baking the cake.	The cake was being baked by Frank.
Past Perfect	Frank had baked the cake.	The cake had been baked by Frank.
Future Perfect	Frank will have baked the cake.	The cake will have been baked by Frank.

When and why do we use the passive?

There are only two instances when we would use the passive voice:

1. When the receiver of the action is more important the do-er.
2. When we don't know or don't say who performed the action.

Let's look at these uses:

The above case is a very common use of the passive voice. We often talk about great works of art or inventions using the passive because sometimes it is more important, or more interesting, than the artist. Here are some examples:

- ▶ *On the Road was written by Jack Kerouac.*
- ▶ *Lord of the Rings was directed by Peter Jackson.*
- ▶ *The lightbulb was invented by Thomas Edison.*

Of course, we could use any of those sentences in the active voice; however, sometimes it is the creation that is more relevant. In that case, you would use the passive voice.

We also use the passive voice when we don't know, or don't need to say, who did the verb.

- ▶ *The woman was murdered last night.* (By whom? We don't know.)
- ▶ *They were arrested after the match.* (By whom? The police, of course.)

Passive voice for IELTS

So… when exactly should we use the passive voice in IELTS?

As we saw above, we often use the passive voice when talking about famous creations like books, movies, and so on. So you might be able to use the passive in the speaking test when asked about these things. Here are some examples:

- ▶ My favourite book is *The Catcher in the Rye*. It was written by JD Salinger.
- ▶ I like rock music. One of my favourite songs is "Sweet Child of Mine," which was sung by Guns 'n' Roses.

However, mostly you will be using the active voice. Remember that the passive voice is quite formal, and not all words can be used in this voice. For example, you cannot use intransitive verbs with the passive. Other times, the passive just makes a sentence confusing and awkward. Look at this example of bad passive use:

- ▶ *~~Paris was visited by me last year. The Eiffel Tower was seen by my family. The food there was really enjoyed by us.~~*

You can use the passive voice in the IELTS writing exam. It's much less common in task 2; however, you will rely heavily upon it for task 1 if you need to describe a process.

For example:
- ▶ *Water is heated to 100 degrees.*
- ▶ *The liquid is extracted from the mix.*
- ▶ *Stones are put into the box.*
- ▶ *Sand is removed from the pipe.*
- ▶ *The payment is received by the merchant.*

In task 2, the passive voice can help make a text more formal. It is not used in every sentence, but some careful use can increase the quality of the writing:

- ▶ *Hosting a major sporting event can be a huge expense for a city, but it does yield significant rewards. In the future, the city may be visited by more tourists, allowing the city government to recoup their expenses during and after the event. Furthermore, if the city's profile is raised significantly, the long-term benefits may include increased tourism and international investment.*

Here, two passive voice sentences have been used. In the first instance, the focus is placed upon the city rather than the tourists, and in the second we don't need to mention who or what is doing the raising. This shows that the city is the focus, which helps keep our writing on-topic, and also sounds better than using a more basic active voice sentences. Finally, by mixing sentence types, we avoid repetition.

Conclusion

The active voice is far more common than the passive voice in English, and therefore you should use it more in the IELTS exam. However, sometimes the passive voice is more appropriate. You should learn the passive so that you can better understand listening and reading passages, but also know when and how to use it yourself. There are times in the speaking and writing exams when you could use the passive voice. The most important is task 1 when you need to describe a process.

Participle Clauses

Participle clauses are a kind of adverbial clause in that they give extra information (such as reasons, time, conditions, or results) to a sentence. I will include them here, rather than in the previous "clauses" section of the book because they are often used in formal writing. As such, they make a very useful addition to an IELTS essay.

What is a Participle Clause?

Put simply, a participle clause normally appears at the beginning of a sentence, using the present or past participle, but taking its subject in the following clause. The information in this clause must relate directly and obviously to the subject in the main clause.

For example,

▶ *Started in 1979, China's One Child Policy was aimed at reducing the rate of population growth.*

As you will notice, there is no subject in the first clause. However, the subject appears at the beginning of the following clause – "China's One Child Policy." This could have been rewritten:

▶ *China's One Child Policy started in 1979. It was aimed at reducing the rate of population growth.*

Thus, the participle clause has helped us combine two simple sentences into one complex sentence, while increasing the degree of formality in our writing. This is the main reason for using a participle clause.

How to Form a Participle Clause

A participle clause will begin with a present or past participle:

▶ *Unwilling to move to the cities, many old people are left in the countryside with little financial support.*
▶ *Angered by the recent changes, many voters are turning against the president.*

You can see that in these examples, the participles ("unwilling"= present participle; "angered"= past participle) refer directly to the subjects. Many old people are unwilling to move to the cities and many voters were angered by the recent changes.

IELTS Examples

Let's look now at some applicable IELTS writing task 2 examples.

Question:
Many criminals commit crimes shortly after being released from prison.
What are the causes of this problem?
What are some solutions?

To this question, we have the opportunity to use participle clauses in many ways. Here are some examples:

▶ *Unable to find a job, the former prisoners return to a life of crime.*
▶ *Finding life on the outside difficult, these people turn to an easy opportunity for money.*
▶ *Presented with few options, prisoners sometimes look to petty crime to survive.*
▶ *Shunned by society, ex-prisoners struggle to make a living.*
▶ *Knowing that they have to work harder than most people to get a job, some of these men turn back to a life of crime in order to get an income.*

Note that in the final example I said "knowing." The verb "know" is considered non-continuous and so we seldom use it with an "-ing" ending. However, with participle clauses you can add "-ing" to non-continuous verbs:

▶ *Being unable to provide for their families, many recently released prisoners feel a sense of shame.*
▶ *Believing that they are unlikely to succeed any other way, some prisoners look to a life of crime as their only option.*

Notes

Participle clauses are useful because they express information economically; however, the relationship between the parts of the sentence must be clear or else it can become confusing. Make sure that the first word in the sentence refers to the subject in the main clause or else you would end up with a dangling participle:

> ▶ ~~Causing a great deal of pollution, people often use cars to drive to work.~~
> ▶ *Causing a great deal of pollution, cars are still the main choice for people getting to work.*
> ▶ *People often use cars to drive to work, although they cause a lot of pollution.*

You should also avoid over-using participle clauses as this may sound unnatural and archaic.

CHAPTER

10

Paragraphing

In any kind of academic writing, paragraphing is of the utmost importance. So far in this textbook, we have learned how to produce sentences. We began with using verbs, then built up to clauses, and finally the different sorts of sentence. Once you can produce a sentence, the next step towards a full essay is linking sentences together into paragraphs.

Although the overall structure of an essay for IELTS writing task 1 and 2 is quite different, the internal structure of a paragraph is quite similar. This is true across most types of writing – from essay to article to letter. Generally speaking, a paragraph is a group of sentences centered on <u>one idea</u>.

How to Structure a Paragraph

Before writing any sort of essay, you should plan what you will write. However, this doesn't merely extend to paragraph topics; you should make notes on what each paragraph includes, and look at how you will structure the paragraph internally. This will stop you from breaking the cardinal rule of paragraphing – one paragraph, one idea.

Like an essay, a paragraph needs a beginning, middle, and end. More specifically, it needs:

- ▶ A topic sentence – a very general sentence which explains the main idea of the paragraph
- ▶ Supporting sentences – any number of sentences which provide details or examples to support or explain the main idea
- ▶ Concluding sentence – one final sentence to summarize and, possibly, further connect the topic and supporting sentences

Topic Sentence

This sentence is usually the first in a paragraph and it will present the main idea in general or vague terms. It could be as simple as:

- ▶ *A lot of people enjoy classical music.*

It should not contain any specific information, and rather than a definite number you might want to say words like "several" or "many."

Supporting Sentences

This is the meat of the paragraph, and it provides all the necessary detail to support the idea expressed in the topic sentence. These will include evidence, explanation, or examples. They may involve facts, figures, or other particular details. They may tell a story, connect ideas, or express degrees of importance.

An example, carrying on from the previously stated classical music topic sentence, could be:

- ▶ *In fact, songs classified as "classical music" were downloaded over twenty million times on Spotify last month.*

Concluding Sentence

In this final sentence, you need to restate the main idea without repeating any part of the paragraph. You will want to allude to or reference ideas from the supporting sentences, while paraphrasing your topic sentence.

An example, continuing from the previous ones:

▶ *It is clear, then, that classical music enjoys a high degree of popularity.*

Planning

When planning an IELTS essay (or any other kind of essay) you should plan out each paragraph in advance so that you know what you need to say, and avoid going off-topic. Let's say we have a task 2 question about conservation, and we decide to talk about tigers. Our plan for one body paragraph might simply look like this:

▶ Main idea: *tigers are endangered because of people*
▶ Support: 3 examples
  — agriculture
  — Chinese medicine
  — logging

This would give us a paragraph that looks like this:

▶ *Although they are beloved by many, tigers face many dangers that are driving them to extinction. All across Asia, their natural environment is being destroyed by the expansion of agriculture, as the human population continues to grow. They are also being hunted and sold for Chinese medicine. Logging is another big problem, as we cut down the forests where they used to live. For these reasons, it is clear that humans are causing tigers to become increasingly endangered.*

It's not bad, but in IELTS a candidate should strive for the best score possible, and so they should try to give a more developed paragraph on this topic. We could easily expand this further to make a more complex paragraph.

To begin with, we would write a plan like this:

▶ Agriculture
  — why expanding
  — how damaging
  — example

- ▶ Chinese medicine
  - — why used
  - — how damaging
  - — details
- ▶ Logging
  - — why it happens
  - — how damaging
  - — example

This would give us a longer, more in-depth paragraph:

- ▶ *Although they are beloved by many, tigers face many dangers that are driving them to extinction. All across Asia, their natural environment is being destroyed by the expansion of agriculture, as the human population continues to grow. As jungles are cut down for farmland, tigers lose their home and often starve to death. In China, over the past 40 years, 99% of the tiger's forest habitat has been destroyed for this reason. They are also being hunted and sold for Chinese medicine. Poachers kill tigers and sell their body parts on the black market, where wealthy Chinese will pay vast sums of money for them. This multi-million dollar trade has decimated the tiger population of Southeast Asia. Logging is another big problem, as we cut down the forests where they used to live. This pushes tigers into conflict with human settlements as resources become scarce. When this happens, the tiger is usually killed. For these reasons, it is clear that humans are causing tigers to become increasingly endangered.*

In the above paragraph, all the supporting sentences build upon the topic sentence, and the concluding sentence refers to the supporting sentences and topic sentence without repeating anything. This is called unity, and it is extremely important.

Note: If you feel your paragraph will grow too long, you should reduce the number of points in your argument. It is better to expand upon one or two points than end up listing many without development. The worst thing, however, would be to run out of time while writing.

Coherence and Cohesion

If you have read the marking criteria for IELTS writing, you may have noticed that 25% of your score comes from "coherence and cohesion." But what does that actually mean?

When writing paragraphs, it is important to maintain **coherence**. This means that the writing should flow logically at a paragraph level. In our plan above, we ensured that each point was expanded upon logically. There are no gaps or sudden jumps in thought. The reader is led through the text sequentially without any surprises. It is not confusing to read, and each fact is explained and or exemplified.

Cohesion refers to the linking of ideas at a sentence level – ie the use of transitional words and phrases. The most basic are ones like "first," "next," and "finally." There are various kinds of transition phrases and these can help you explain order, importance, or relationship between ideas. These are used more frequently in writing than speaking, and more frequently in formal writing than in informal. A reasonable number of transitional phrases will make your writing appear more academic, although don't go overboard or it sounds unnatural and odd. Try to make use of some common linking phrases like "meanwhile," "however," and "therefore." Correctly used, these can help you join your ideas together. However, pay attention to the rules of punctuation we discussed in the clauses section of this book.

A Final Note

I hope that this handbook has been helpful for you. It contains the most important advice regarding basic grammar for IELTS. Of course, not everything can be included in one short book, but it is enough to get you through this exam. For more complex explanations of grammatical issues, you should consult more detailed sources. It is also vital that you prepare by practicing regularly. Have English-speaking friends and teachers look at your work, and remember to ask them about anything new you have learned. It can be easy to develop mistakes in your writing without noticing.

After finishing this textbook, you should look at other people's writing more critically. Ask yourself why certain words go together, or why a particular structure has been applied to a piece of writing. In this way, you begin to learn more effectively. Handbooks and textbooks can only provide you with the basics; real world experience will push you towards excellence.

I wish you the best of luck with your IELTS exam. Remember to practice often, seek help from others, and most importantly – don't be nervous! Success rewards effort, and those who prepare adequately will invariably triumph.

David S. Wills, 2018.