

How to improve your level and get the IELTS score you want

advice on how to improve the 4 skills you are tested on in the IELTS exam.

- **Spending money does not guarantee results. Working hard does.**

how long do you need to prepare for the exam?

Common European Framework (CEF)	Cambridge ESOL exams	Typical Language school levels	IELTS scores
A1		Elementary	1 -2
A2	KET	Pre Intermediate	3
B1	PET	Intermediate	3.5 – 4.5
B2	FCE	Upper Intermediate	5 - 6
C1	CAE	Lower Advanced 6	6.5 - 7
C2	CPE	Advanced	7.5+

you are an Upper Intermediate student and you need 5.5

- - do a practice reading and listening test at:
- http://www.myielteacher.com/reading_practice_tests.html
- http://www.myielteacher.com/practice_tests.html
- Count how many correct answers you get and then use the **IELTS score calculator** on these web pages to find out your approximate IELTS score. If you get **less** than 5.5 you need to make some improvements for **1 or 2 months**. Use the websites suggested to work on your speaking and writing, and try a practice test. Then take another practice reading and listening test to see if you have improved. Once you have reached the right score then you are ready to try the exam.

you are an Upper Intermediate student and you want 6.5-7+

- you need to work on improving your level. This could take 6 months. After that you can try a practice test and check your reading and listening scores.
- **Remember:** if you only do IELTS practice tests you **WILL NOT** improve your level or your overall IELTS score.

The only way to improve is to

- **PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE.**
- **6.5** - means you can study at university or live/work in another country.

the most important rule is:

- ***‘Little and often.’***
- Doing a little practice everyday is far more beneficial than 2 hours once a week. You only need to spend **15 minutes every day** to help you improve

However, ONLY doing IELTS practice tests
WILL NOT improve your level or your overall
IELTS score.

- You need to focus on the different skills in English:
- **Reading**
- **Listening**
- **Writing**
- **Speaking**
- **Grammar**
- **Vocabulary**

Reading

- You need to develop your **‘reading strategies’** so that you can read more proficiently in English. They are:
 - 1. skimming – quickly define the main topic of the paragraph**
 - 2. Scanning – use punctuation, symbols, numbers etc. to find information quickly**
 - 3. Use real English texts for reading**

Find real English texts on:

- www.guardian.co.uk
- www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-magazine-archive-page.htm
- www.theaustralian.com.au
- www.nytimes.com
- www.economist.com
- www.newscientist.com
- <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/archives>
- www.newsweek.com
- www.newint.org

Regularly revise what you have learned:

- Watch TV series on IELTS:
- you can download from the internet:
- http://australianetwork.com/studyenglish/se_about.htm
- There are 3 series to watch and they cover all aspects of Grammar, Vocabulary, Listening, Speaking, Writing and Reading for Academic IELTS. (series 3 focus on reading strategies)

Listening

develop your '**listening strategies**'

While listening

1. don't panic when you hear unknown words.

Focus on the words that you understand – try to grasp the main idea

2. Read the questions before you listen, think about the topic you might be listening to, and use your knowledge of English to help you guess the answer

3. Guess the answer -think about the grammar of your answer. Does the 'gap' require a noun, adjective, verb, a name, number, place, time etc.?

listen to the radio and watch TV.

sites on the internet to use

- www.uksuperweb.co.uk/radio.html -
-
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/video_and_audio/default.stm -
- <http://au.news.yahoo.com/vodcast/> -
-
- <http://news.ninemsn.com.au/video.aspx> -
-
- <http://edition.cnn.com/video/> - .
-
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/how2> -

sites where you can **listen and answer questions**:

- <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-listening-downloads-articles.htm>
-
- <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/professionals-podcasts>
-
- <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-professionals-archive.htm>
-
- <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/ielts-mock-papers>

More advice on listening:

- While listening to something in English at home (the news, the class CD etc.) listen again and again, and try to write down every word you hear.
- Studying in an English class go back over the listening activities - listen to the CD several times to work out why the correct answers are correct, or check the tape script at the back of the book.
-

Writing

Train your writing skills:

- find out how to brainstorm and plan essays, and develop your vocabulary for describing graphs here:

- www.myielteacher.com

-

- www.bestielsonline.com

-

- www.dcielts.com

To improve your formal writing skills

you need to **focus on** these areas:

- **GRAMMAR**
- **VOCABULARY**

GRAMMAR

- work out **what your main problems are**
- find out where you are making mistakes (verb tenses, passive structures, prepositions, articles etc.)
- use a good grammar book or
- useful English grammar websites:
- <http://www.englishcorner.vacau.com/grammar/grammar.html>
-
- <http://www.englishgrammarsecrets.com/>
-
- <http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar>
-
- <http://esl.about.com/od/intermediateenglish/u/continue.htm>
-
- <http://www.english-at-home.com/grammar/>
-
- <http://www.world-english.org/>

REMEMBER:

- always check it when you've finished your writing
- you **don't have to be perfect** to get the IELTS score you want (6.5 -7+)
- make sure your basic grammar is **accurate (tenses, prepositions, spelling, possessive apostrophes)**.
- use some complex sentences.

VOCABULARY

- work out what your main problems are:
 - 1. using the wrong grammatical forms**
 - 2. using the correct word but in the wrong place in the sentence**
 - 3. how a word is used with other words**

In order to know how to use a word correctly :

- use an English-English dictionary for students, or
- check online:
 - <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
 - <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>
- **If you think your vocabulary is too basic** and you need to develop it, check:
 - www.myielteacher.com
 - www.bestielts.com
 - www.dcielts.com

More advice on grammar and vocabulary:

- The best way to remember words is to **repeat them.**
- Write a word on a piece of paper and add an example, include personal information
- Learn 10 new words per week (remember them in a month)
- use **passive structures, relative clauses and if-clauses/conditional sentences** - you need to use them accurately most of the time

Get help with these topics online:

- <http://www.englishcorner.vacau.com/grammar/grammar.html>
- <http://www.englishgrammarsecrets.com/>
- <http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar>
- <http://esl.about.com/od/intermediateenglish/u/continue.htm>
- <http://www.english-at-home.com/grammar/>
- <http://www.world-english.org/>

General advice on improving writing skills:

- If you think you have more problems with one of these skills than the others then you need to focus on that skill. **Work out what your main problems are.** How do you do this? In the same way as with grammar, look back over past writing you have produced .check the advice and links on these web pages:
 - www.myielteacher.com
 - www.bestieltonline.com
 - www.dcielts.com

Speaking

you can't speak naturally and confidently, and you always stop and start because you can't find the right word – you have problems with

fluency

- Speak more – find a speaking partner on Facebook - search for **Splendid Speaking, Best IELTS Online** and **My IELTS Teacher** – they all have Facebook pages., Try these links:
 - http://www.myielstteacher.com/speaking_test_practice.html
 - <http://www.ielts-blog.com/ielts-preparation-tips/speaking-tips/ielts-speaking-test-questions/>

Speaking

- If you can't find a partner then **speak to yourself** (in English) on these topics:
- what you have done today
- what you're going to do tomorrow
- any problems you need to solve
- any arguments you've had and what you wish you'd said
- **record yourself doing this.**

When you listen you can check several things:

- how often do you hesitate or use 'er...'?
- do you use the same words all the time?

you could try to use new vocabulary that you have learnt and notice which words you use

Speaking

- you are making lots of mistakes with your grammar and vocabulary when you speak - you have problems with **accuracy**.

To improve -

- ask your teacher about the mistakes
- **record your speaking** - when you listen to the recording try to **notice when you make mistakes**

Check a good grammar book or search online:

- <http://www.englishcorner.vacau.com/grammar/grammar.html>
- <http://www.englishgrammarsecrets.com/>
- <http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar>
- <http://esl.about.com/od/intermediateenglish/u/continue.htm>
- <http://www.english-at-home.com/grammar/>
- <http://www.world-english.org/>

•One final word....

- Don't give up. Don't get depressed. If you work hard you can achieve. If you really want to study at university and you need a specific IELTS result, then your motivation and desire is strong enough to help you.

•Believe in yourself.