

IELTS Assessment Scales: Enhancing Transparency and Reliability

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IELTS Assessment Scales: Enhancing Transparency and Reliability

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What is IELTS?



IELTS is the International English Language Testing System



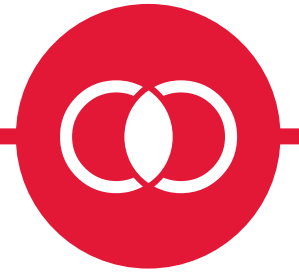
A test of all four language skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking)



A test of international English



High stakes English language assessment for people who intend to study or work where English is the language of communication



Jointly owned by IDP: IELTS Australia, British Council and Cambridge Assessment English

Test Format

Academic



Listening

30 minutes | 4 sections | 40 questions

Reading

60 minutes | 3 sections | 40 questions

Writing

60 minutes | 2 tasks

Speaking

11 - 14 minutes | 3 parts

General Training



Listening

30 minutes | 4 sections | 40 questions

Reading

60 minutes | 3 sections | 40 questions

Writing

60 minutes | 2 tasks

Speaking

11 - 14 minutes | 3 parts

Total test time



2 hours 44 minutes

Speaking construct:

What is assessed in IELTS

Speaking

- IELTS views speaking as situated social practice which involves interaction with others.
- Not only a cognitive but also a socio-cognitive activity.
- The use of a multi part Speaking test format allows for different patterns of spoken interaction, i.e., question and answer uninterrupted monologue and two-way discussion



Speaking Test Format
11-14 minutes | 3 parts

Part 1:
Questions about you (4 - 5 mins)

Part 2:
Talking about a topic for up to 2 minutes (3 - 4 mins)

Part 3:
General discussion, linked to Part 2 (4 - 5 mins)

Writing construct:

What is assessed in IELTS

- a contextualised phenomenon and fundamentally a communicative act.
- the writer-reader roles, the purpose and task type

Higher order Skills assessed in the Writing Tasks:

- The ability to transfer information in a logical way.
- The ability to put forth a stance and elaborate on ideas.
- The ability to operationalize textual competence and organise and link ideas logically.
- The ability to use language flexibly and accurately.



Writing Test Format

60 minutes| 2 Tasks

Task one (minimum 150 words, 20 minutes)

Report (AC), or

Letter/email (GT)

Task two (minimum 250 words, 40 minutes)

Essay

What are rating scales?

Simple definition

- a measurement tool developed to assess performance/ behavior, or relevant characteristics of performance.
- a structured framework for assigning scores to different attributes based on predefined criteria

What lies in scales

- Construct:
Key indicators of behaviour/performance
- Scaling/grading

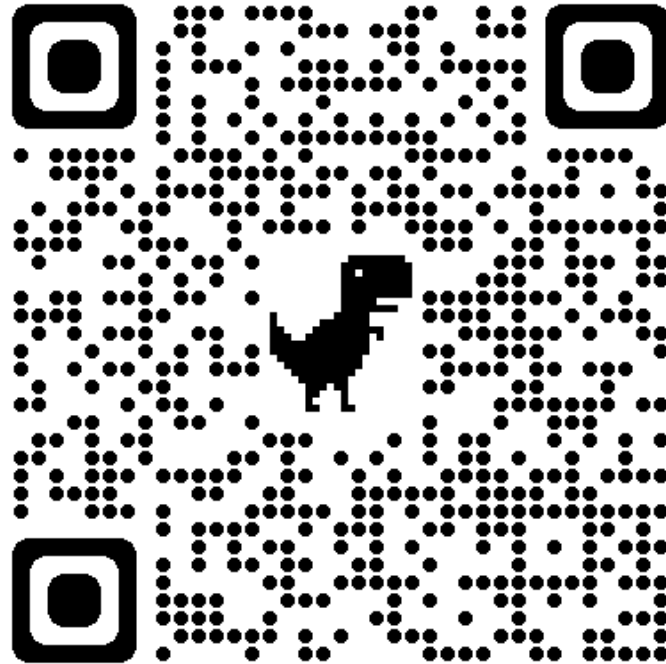
Use cases

- Assessment tool: consistency and systematic analytical rating
- Support for teaching
- Support for course/curriculum design
- Support in designing small scale targeted tests by teachers

IELTS Writing Band Descriptors

Criteria

- Task Achievement (for Task 1), Task Response (for Task 2)
- Coherence and Cohesion
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy



Key indicators-an example

The Task Response (TR) criterion assesses:

- how fully the candidate responds to the task.
- how adequately the main ideas are extended and supported.
- how relevant the candidate's ideas are to the task.
- how clearly the candidate opens the discourse, establishes their position and formulates conclusions.
- how appropriate the format of the response is to the task

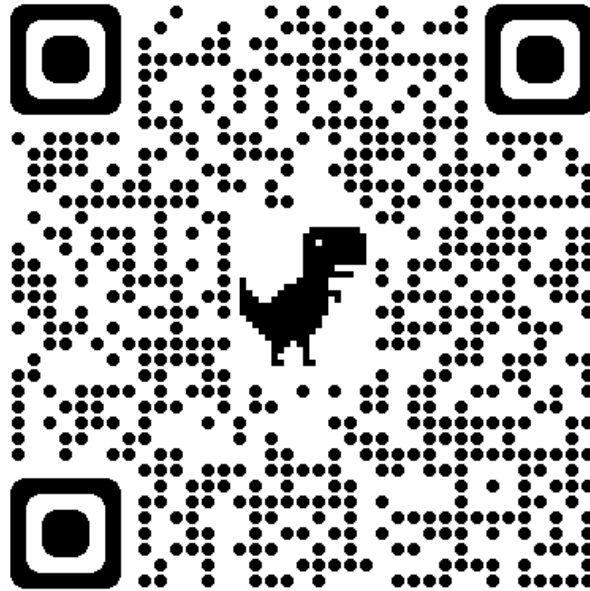
*the full list and explanation of key indicators are included in the Key Assessment Criteria document

IELTS Speaking Band descriptors

Criteria

- Fluency and Coherence
- Lexical Resource
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy
- Pronunciation

Speaking Band Descriptors



Key Indicators- an example

Key indicators of fluency

- speech rate: ideally, not too slow (hard to keep links between words/propositions in mind)
- speech continuity: ideally, flow of speech will not be excessively interrupted by false starts, backtracking, functionless repetitions of words and phrases, and/or pausing during which the test taker searches for words.

*the full list and explanation of key indicators are included in the Key Assessment Criteria document

Scaling/grading of key indicators

An example from Speaking BDs

**The green highlights show the indicator and blue the finer details on how an indicator scales up or down*

Band Score	Fluency and coherence
9	<p>Fluent with only very occasional repetition or self-correction.</p> <p>Any hesitation that occurs is used only to prepare the content of the next utterance and not to find words or grammar.</p> <p>Speech is situationally appropriate and cohesive features are fully acceptable.</p> <p>Topic development is fully coherent and appropriately extended.</p>
8	<p>Fluent with only very occasional repetition or self-correction.</p> <p>Hesitation may occasionally be used to find words or grammar, but most will be content related.</p> <p>Topic development is coherent, appropriate and relevant.</p>
7	<p>Able to keep going and readily produce long turns without noticeable effort.</p> <p>Some hesitation, repetition and/or self-correction may occur, often mid-sentence and indicate problems with accessing appropriate language. However, these will not affect coherence.</p> <p>Flexible use of spoken discourse markers, connectives and cohesive features.</p>

An example from Writing BDs

**The green highlights show the indicator and blue the finer details on how an indicator scales up or down*

Band Score	Task Response
6	<p>The main parts of the prompt are addressed (though some may be more fully covered than others). An appropriate format is used.</p> <p>A position is presented that is directly relevant to the prompt, although the conclusions drawn may be unclear, unjustified or repetitive.</p> <p>Main ideas are relevant, but some may be insufficiently developed or may lack clarity, while some supporting arguments and evidence may be less relevant or inadequate.</p>
5	<p>The main parts of the prompt are incompletely addressed. The format may be inappropriate in places.</p> <p>The writer expresses a position, but the development is not always clear.</p> <p>Some main ideas are put forward, but they are limited and are not sufficiently developed and/or there may be irrelevant detail.</p> <p>There may be some repetition.</p>

Steps to take to use band descriptors



Know what is being asked

- ✓ Construct
- ✓ Higher Order Skills



Go through the band descriptors

- ✓ Start with Criteria
- ✓ Go one level down to the key indicators outlined in the *Key Assessment Criteria* document
- ✓ Check out how the indicators are scaled



Refer to exemplar and supporting material

- ✓ IELTS Scores Explained
- ✓ IELTS Teacher Training Program
- ✓ IELTS.org website

Reliability and Transparency

Reliability

making sure that we're being fair and consistent, and that each mark or grade is accurate and realistic.

Transparency

to make sure that TTs know how assessment works. They need to know what we're looking for

Transparency

help TTs to see that what is being assessed is their evidence of achievement of intended attributes

How does transparency help



communicate expectations to TTs



positively affect TT performance



reduce TT anxiety



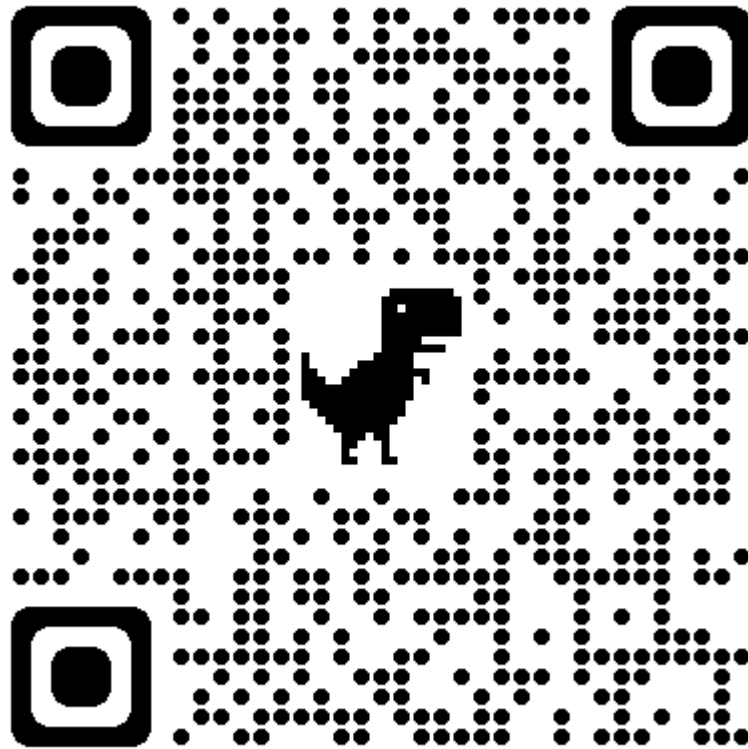
support self-regulated learning strategies



Help focus teaching and optimise learning



IELTS Band
Descriptors, and
Key assessment
Criteria





Questions & Answers