

# ***IELTS Secrets***

Your Key to IELTS Success

*From the Director of Test-Taking Strategy-*

Dear future IELTS Success Story:

Congratulations on your purchase of the most advanced test-taking manual for the IELTS. Notice I did not say study guide- there are plenty of decent study guides on the market, but that was not our objective in writing this manual. Our goal is to seek and exploit specific weaknesses in the IELTS assessment, and then share those secrets with our customers.

Let's be perfectly honest here- you've worked hard enough in the past, and if you want to spend hours in a study guide to boost your score, that's a great thing to do. In fact, we recommend at least a brief review of some of the better study guides on the market. But that's simply not enough to do well in the high-pressure high-stakes environment of the test day. How well you do on this test will have a significant impact on your future- and we have the research and practical advice to help you execute on test day.

The product you're reading now is much more than a study guide- it is a tactical weapon designed to exploit weaknesses in the test itself, and help you avoid the most common errors students make when taking the IELTS.

## How to use this manual

We don't want to waste your time. This manual is fast-paced and fluff-free. We suggest going through it a number of times, trying out its methods on a number of practice tests.

First, read through the manual completely to get a feel for the content and organization. Read the general success strategies first, and then proceed to

the individual test sections. Each tip has been carefully selected for its effectiveness.

Second, read through the manual again, and take notes in the margins and highlight those sections where you may have a particular weakness (we strongly suggest printing the manual out on a high-quality printer).

Third, go through at least one practice test with the manual at your side and apply the strategies. We believe three practice tests to be the maximum benefit, the first time with all strategies except time (take as much time as you need), the second time with all strategies and time constraints, and a third time without the benefit of the open manual to refer to during the test.

Finally, bring the manual with you on test day and study it before the exam begins.

Your success is our success

We would be delighted to hear your IELTS Success Story. Send us an email and tell us your story. Thanks for your business and we wish you continued success-

Sincerely,

The IELTS Secrets Team

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECRET KEY #1 – TIME IS YOUR GREATEST ENEMY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
SUCCESS STRATEGY #1 .....	2
<i>Pace Yourself</i> .....	2
<i>Scanning</i> .....	3
<b>SECRET KEY #2 – GUESSING IS NOT GUESSWORK.....</b>	<b>4</b>
MONKEYS TAKE THE IELTS .....	4
SUCCESS STRATEGY #2 .....	5
SPECIFIC GUESSING TECHNIQUES .....	7
<i>Slang</i> .....	7
<i>Extreme Statements</i> .....	7
<i>Similar Answer Choices</i> .....	7
<i>Hedging</i> .....	8
SUMMARY OF GUESSING TECHNIQUES .....	8
<b>SECRET KEY #3 – PRACTICE SMARTER, NOT HARDER .....</b>	<b>9</b>
SUCCESS STRATEGY #3 .....	9
<b>SECRET KEY #4 – PREPARE, DON’T PROCRASTINATE.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SECRET KEY #5 – TEST YOURSELF .....</b>	<b>11</b>
SUCCESS STRATEGY .....	11
<b>TOP 20 TEST TAKING TIPS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>GENERAL STRATEGIES.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Make Predictions</i> .....	13
<i>Answer the Question</i> .....	13
<i>Benchmark</i> .....	13
<i>Valid Information</i> .....	14
<i>Avoid “Fact Traps”</i> .....	14
<i>Milk the Question</i> .....	15
<i>The Trap of Familiarity</i> .....	15
<i>Eliminate Answers</i> .....	15
<i>Tough Questions</i> .....	16
<i>Brainstorm</i> .....	16
<i>Read Carefully</i> .....	16

<i>Face Value</i> .....	17
<i>Prefixes</i> .....	17
<i>Hedge Phrases</i> .....	17
<i>Switchback Words</i> .....	18
<i>New Information</i> .....	18
<i>Time Management</i> .....	18
<i>Contextual Clues</i> .....	18
<i>Don't Panic</i> .....	19
<i>Pace Yourself</i> .....	19
<i>Answer Selection</i> .....	19
<i>Check Your Work</i> .....	19
<i>Beware of Directly Quoted Answers</i> .....	20
<i>Slang</i> .....	20
<i>Extreme Statements</i> .....	20
<i>Answer Choice Families</i> .....	20
<b>THE LISTENING MODULE</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<i>Main Ideas</i> .....	22
<i>Voice Changes</i> .....	22
<i>Specifics</i> .....	23
<i>Interpret</i> .....	23
<i>Find the Hidden Meaning</i> .....	23
<i>Memory Enhancers</i> .....	24
<b>THE READING MODULE</b> .....	<b>26</b>
SKIMMING .....	26
PARAGRAPH FOCUS .....	28
ELIMINATE CHOICES.....	29
CONTEXTUAL CLUES .....	30
FACT/OPINION .....	30
<i>Opposites</i> .....	31
<i>Make Predictions</i> .....	32
<i>Answer the Question</i> .....	32
<i>Benchmark</i> .....	32
<i>New Information</i> .....	33
<i>Key Words</i> .....	33
<i>Valid Information</i> .....	34
TIME MANAGEMENT.....	34

FINAL WARNINGS .....	34
<i>Hedge Phrases Revisited</i> .....	34
<i>Word Usage Questions</i> .....	35
<i>Switchback Words</i> .....	35
<i>Avoid “Fact Traps”</i> .....	36
<b>THE WRITING MODULE .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>Brainstorm</i> .....	37
<i>Strength through Diversity</i> .....	37
<i>Pick a Main Idea</i> .....	38
<i>Weed the Garden</i> .....	38
<i>Create a Logical Flow</i> .....	39
<i>Start Your Engines</i> .....	39
<i>Don’t Panic</i> .....	40
<i>Check Your Work</i> .....	41
<i>Shortcut Keys</i> .....	42
FINAL NOTE.....	42
<b>THE SPEAKING MODULE .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<i>Part 1</i> .....	44
<i>Part 2</i> .....	44
<i>Part 3</i> .....	44
<i>Exhausting the Possibilities</i> .....	45
<i>Tell a Story</i> .....	45
<i>One Size Fits All</i> .....	46
<i>Find the Bridges</i> .....	47
<i>Pregnant Pause</i> .....	48
<i>Taking the Final Step</i> .....	48
<i>Practice Makes Perfect</i> .....	49
<b>SPECIAL REPORT: HOW YOUR IELTS SCORE IS VIEWED, AND WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>SPECIAL REPORT: WHAT JOBS REQUIRE WHICH IELTS SCORES.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>SPECIAL REPORT: WHICH ADDITIONAL SOURCES ARE WORTH YOUR TIME.....</b>	<b>52</b>
PRACTICE TESTS.....	52
<b>SPECIAL REPORT: WHAT YOUR TEST SCORE WILL TELL YOU ABOUT YOUR IQ .....</b>	<b>53</b>

**SPECIAL REPORT: RETAKING THE TEST: WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES AT IMPROVING YOUR SCORE?..... 56**

**SPECIAL REPORT: WHAT IS TEST ANXIETY AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT?..... 59**

LACK OF PREPARATION ..... 59

PHYSICAL SIGNALS..... 60

NERVOUSNESS ..... 61

STUDY STEPS..... 64

HELPFUL TECHNIQUES ..... 66

**SPECIAL REPORT: ADDITIONAL BONUS MATERIAL..... 74**

## ***Secret Key #1 – Time is your greatest enemy.***

To succeed on the IELTS, you must use your time wisely. Many students do not finish at least one module. The table below shows the time challenge you are faced with:

<b>Module</b>	<b>Total amount of time allotted</b>	<b>Number of questions</b>	<b>Time to answer each question</b>
Listening	30 min	40	.75 min
Reading	60 min	40	.67 min
Writing	60 min	2	30 min
Speaking	11-14 min	N/A	N/A

As you can see, the time constraints are brutal. To succeed, you must ration your time properly. The reason that time is so critical is that every question counts the same toward your final score. If you run out of time on any passage, the questions that you do not answer will hurt your score far more than earlier questions that you spent extra time on and feel certain are correct.

On the Reading Module, the test is separated into passages. The reason that time is so critical is that 1) every question counts the same toward your final score, and 2) the passages are not in order of difficulty. If you have to rush during the last passage, then you will miss out on answering easier questions correctly. It is natural to want to pause and figure out the hardest questions, but you must resist the temptation and move quickly.

## Success Strategy #1

### *Pace Yourself*

Wear a watch to the IELTS Test. At the beginning of the test, check the time (or start a chronometer on your watch to count the minutes), and check the time after each passage or every few questions to make sure you are “on schedule.”

Remember that on the Listening and Reading Modules you have a little over half a minute for each question. If you can work quickly, you can pace yourself at half a minute per question, which makes it easy to keep track of your time.

If you find that you are falling behind time during the test, you must speed up. Even though a rushed answer is more likely to be incorrect, it is better to miss a couple of questions by being rushed, than to completely miss later questions by not having enough time. It is better to end with more time than you need than to run out of time.

If you are forced to speed up, do it efficiently. Usually one or more answer choices can be eliminated without too much difficulty. Above all, don't panic. Don't speed up and just begin guessing at random choices. By pacing yourself, and continually monitoring your progress against the clock or your watch, you will always know exactly how far ahead or behind you are with your available time. If you find that you are a few minutes behind on a module, don't skip questions without spending any time on it, just to catch back up. Spend perhaps a little less than half a minute per question and after a few questions, you will have caught back up more gradually. Once you catch back up, you can continue working each problem at your normal pace. If you have time at the end, go back then and finish the questions that you left behind.

Furthermore, don't dwell on the problems that you were rushed on. If a problem was taking up too much time and you made a hurried guess, it must have been

difficult. The difficult questions are the ones you are most likely to miss anyway, so it isn't a big loss. If you have time left over, as you review the skipped questions, start at the earliest skipped question, spend at most another half a minute, and then move on to the next skipped question.

Lastly, sometimes it is beneficial to slow down if you are constantly getting ahead of time. You are always more likely to catch a careless mistake by working more slowly than quickly, and among very high-scoring test takers (those who are likely to have lots of time left over), careless errors affect the score more than mastery of material.

### ***Scanning***

For Reading passages, don't waste time reading, enjoying, and completely understanding the passage. Simply scan the passage to get a rough idea of what it is about. You will return to the passage for each question, so there is no need to memorize it. Only spend as much time scanning as is necessary to get a vague impression of its overall subject content.

## ***Secret Key #2 – Guessing is not guesswork.***

You probably know that guessing is a good idea on the IELTS- unlike other standardized tests, there is no penalty for getting a wrong answer. Even if you have no idea about a question, you still have a 20-25% chance of getting it right.

Most students do not understand the impact that proper guessing can have on their score. Unless you score extremely high, guessing will significantly contribute to your final score.

### **Monkeys Take the IELTS**

What most students don't realize is that to insure that 20-25% chance, you have to guess randomly. If you put 20 monkeys in a room to take the IELTS, assuming they answered once per question and behaved themselves, on average they would get 20-25% of the questions correct on a five choice multiple choice problem. Put 20 students in the room, and the average will be much lower among guessed questions. Why?

1. IELTS intentionally writes deceptive answer choices that "look" right. A student has no idea about a question, so picks the "best looking" answer, which is often wrong. The monkey has no idea what looks good and what doesn't, so will consistently be lucky about 20-25% of the time.
2. Students will eliminate answer choices from the guessing pool based on a hunch or intuition. Simple but correct answers often get excluded, leaving a 0% chance of being correct. The monkey has no clue, and often gets lucky with the best choice.

This is why the process of elimination endorsed by most test courses is flawed and detrimental to your performance- students don't guess, they make an ignorant stab in the dark that is usually worse than random.

## Success Strategy #2

Let me introduce one of the most valuable ideas of this course- the \$5 challenge:

*You only mark your “best guess” if you are willing to bet \$5 on it.*

*You only eliminate choices from guessing if you are willing to bet \$5 on it.*

Why \$5? Five dollars is an amount of money that is small yet not insignificant, and can really add up fast (20 questions could cost you \$100). Likewise, each answer choice on one question of the IELTS will have a small impact on your overall score, but it can really add up to a lot of points in the end.

The process of elimination IS valuable. The following shows your chance of guessing it right:

If you eliminate this many choices on a 3 choice multiple choice problem:	0	1	2
Chance of getting it correct	33%	50%	100%

However, if you accidentally eliminate the right answer or go on a hunch for an incorrect answer, your chances drop dramatically: to 0%. By guessing among all the answer choices, you are GUARANTEED to have a shot at the right answer.

That’s why the \$5 test is so valuable- if you give up the advantage and safety of a pure guess, it had better be worth the risk.

What we still haven’t covered is how to be sure that whatever guess you make is truly random. Here’s the easiest way:

*Always pick the first answer choice among those remaining.*

Such a technique means that you have decided, **before you see a single test question**, exactly how you are going to guess- and since the order of choices

tells you nothing about which one is correct, this guessing technique is perfectly random.

Let's try an example-

A student encounters the following problem on the Listening Module in a conversation about the chemical term "amine," a derivative of ammonia:

In the reaction, the amine will be?

- A. neutralized
- B. protonated
- C. deprotonated

The student has a small idea about this question- he is pretty sure that the amine will be deprotonated, but he wouldn't bet \$5 on it. He knows that the amine is either protonated or deprotonated, so he is willing to bet \$5 on choice A not being correct. Now he is down to B and C. At this point, he guesses B, since B is the first choice remaining.

The student is correct by choosing B, since the amine will be protonated. He only eliminated those choices he was willing to bet money on, AND he did not let his stale memories (often things not known definitely will get mixed up in the exact opposite arrangement in one's head) about protonation and deprotonation influence his guess. He blindly chose the first remaining choice, and was rewarded with the fruits of a random guess.

This section is not meant to scare you away from making educated guesses or eliminating choices- you just need to define when a choice is worth eliminating. The \$5 test, along with a pre-defined random guessing strategy, is the best way to make sure you reap all of the benefits of guessing.

## Specific Guessing Techniques

### ***Slang***

Scientific sounding answers are better than slang ones. In the answer choices below, choice B is much less scientific and is incorrect, while choice A is a scientific analytical choice and is correct.

Example:

- A.) To compare the outcomes of the two different kinds of treatment.
- B.) Because some subjects insisted on getting one or the other of the treatments.

### ***Extreme Statements***

Avoid wild answers that throw out highly controversial ideas that are proclaimed as established fact. Choice A is a radical idea and is incorrect. Choice B is a calm rational statement. Notice that Choice B does not make a definitive, uncompromising stance, using a hedge word “if” to provide wiggle room.

Example:

- A.) Bypass surgery should be discontinued completely.
- B.) Medication should be used instead of surgery for patients who have not had a heart attack if they suffer from mild chest pain and mild coronary artery blockage.

### ***Similar Answer Choices***

When you have two answer choices that are direct opposites, one of them is usually the correct answer.

Example:

- A.) described the author’s reasoning about the influence of his *childhood* on his adult life.
- B.) described the author’s reasoning about the influence of his *parents* on his adult life.

These two answer choices are very similar and fall into the same family of answer choices. A family of answer choices is when two or three answer choices are very similar. Often two will be opposites and one may show an equality.

Example:

- A.) Plan I or Plan II can be conducted at equal cost
- B.) Plan I would be less expensive than Plan II
- C.) Plan II would be less expensive than Plan I
- D.) Neither Plan I nor Plan II would be effective

Note how the first three choices are all related. They all ask about a cost comparison. Beware of immediately recognizing choices B and C as opposites and choosing one of those two. Choice A is in the same family of questions and should be considered as well. However, choice D is not in the same family of questions. It has nothing to do with cost and can be discounted in most cases.

### ***Hedging***

When asked for a conclusion that may be drawn, look for critical “hedge” phrases, such as likely, may, can, will often, sometimes, etc, often, almost, mostly, usually, generally, rarely, sometimes. Question writers insert these hedge phrases to cover every possibility. Often an answer will be wrong simply because it leaves no room for exception. Avoid answer choices that have definitive words like “exactly,” and “always”.

## **Summary of Guessing Techniques**

1. Eliminate as many choices as you can by using the \$5 test. Use the common guessing strategies to help in the elimination process, but only eliminate choices that pass the \$5 test.
2. Among the remaining choices, only pick your “best guess” if it passes the \$5 test.
3. Otherwise, guess randomly by picking the first remaining choice.

## ***Secret Key #3 – Practice Smarter, Not Harder***

Many students delay the test preparation process because they dread the awful amounts of practice time they think necessary to succeed on the test. We have refined an effective method that will take you only a fraction of the time.

There are a number of “obstacles” in your way on the IELTS. Among these are answering questions, finishing in time, and mastering test-taking strategies. All must be executed on the day of the test at peak performance, or your score will suffer. The IELTS is a mental marathon that has a large impact on your future.

Just like a marathon runner, it is important to work your way up to the full challenge. So first you just worry about questions, and then time, and finally strategy:

### **Success Strategy #3**

1. Find a good source for IELTS practice tests.
2. If you are willing to make a larger time investment, consider using more than one study guide- often the different approaches of multiple authors will help you "get" difficult concepts.
3. Take a practice test with no time constraints, with all study helps “open book.” Take your time with questions and focus on applying the strategies.
4. Take another test, this time with time constraints, with all study helps “open book.”
5. Take a final practice test with no open material and time limits.

If you have time to take more practice tests, just repeat step 5. By gradually exposing yourself to the full rigors of the test environment, you will condition your mind to the stress of test day and maximize your success.

## ***Secret Key #4 – Prepare, Don't Procrastinate***

Let me state an obvious fact: if you take the IELTS three times, you will get three different scores. This is due to the way you feel on test day, the level of preparedness you have, and, despite IELTS's claims to the contrary, some tests WILL be easier for you than others.

Since so much depends on your score, you should maximize your chances of success. In order to maximize the likelihood of success, you've got to prepare in advance. This means taking practice tests and spending time learning the information and test taking strategies you will need to succeed.

You can always retake the test more than once, but remember that you will have to wait a minimum of three months before retaking the test. Don't get into a situation where you need a higher score and can't afford to wait, so don't take the IELTS as a "practice" test. Feel free to take sample tests on your own, but when you go to take the IELTS, be prepared, be focused, and do your best the first time!

## ***Secret Key #5 – Test Yourself***

Everyone knows that time is money. There is no need to spend too much of your time or too little of your time preparing for the IELTS. You should only spend as much of your precious time preparing as is necessary for you to pass it.

### **Success Strategy**

Once you have taken a practice test under real conditions of time constraints, then you will know if you are ready for the test or not.

If you have scored extremely high the first time that you take a practice test, then there is not much point in spending countless hours studying. You are already there.

Benchmark your abilities by retaking practice tests and seeing how much you have improved. Once you score high enough, then you are ready.

If you have scored well below where you need, then knuckle down and begin studying in earnest. Check your improvement regularly through the use of practice tests under real conditions. Above all, don't worry, panic, or give up. The key is perseverance!

Then, when you go to take the IELTS, remain confident and remember how well you did on the practice tests. If you can score high enough on a practice test, then you can do the same on the real thing.

## ***Top 20 Test Taking Tips***

1. Carefully follow all the test registration procedures
2. Know the test directions, duration, topics, question types, how many questions
3. Setup a flexible study schedule at least 3-4 weeks before test day
4. Study during the time of day you are most alert, relaxed, and stress free
5. Maximize your learning style; visual learner use visual study aids, auditory learner use auditory study aids
6. Focus on your weakest knowledge base
7. Find a study partner to review with and help clarify questions
8. Practice, practice, practice
9. Get a good night's sleep; don't try to cram the night before the test
10. Eat a well balanced meal
11. Know the exact physical location of the testing site; drive the route to the site prior to test day
12. Bring a set of ear plugs; the testing center could be noisy
13. Wear comfortable, loose fitting, layered clothing to the testing center; prepare for it to be either cold or hot during the test
14. Bring at least 2 current forms of ID to the testing center
15. Arrive to the test early; be prepared to wait and be patient
16. Eliminate the obviously wrong answer choices, then guess the first remaining choice
17. Pace yourself; don't rush, but keep working and move on if you get stuck
18. Maintain a positive attitude even if the test is going poorly
19. Keep your first answer unless you are positive it is wrong
20. Check your work, don't make a careless mistake

## ***General Strategies***

The most important thing you can do is to ignore your fears and jump into the test immediately- do not be overwhelmed by any strange-sounding terms. You have to jump into the test like jumping into a pool- all at once is the easiest way.

### ***Make Predictions***

As you read and understand the question, try to guess what the answer will be. Remember that several of the answer choices are wrong, and once you begin reading them, your mind will immediately become cluttered with answer choices designed to throw you off. Your mind is typically the most focused immediately after you have read the question and digested its contents. If you can, try to predict what the correct answer will be. You may be surprised at what you can predict.

Quickly scan the choices and see if your prediction is in the listed answer choices. If it is, then you can be quite confident that you have the right answer. It still won't hurt to check the other answer choices, but most of the time, you've got it!

### ***Answer the Question***

It may seem obvious to only pick answer choices that answer the question, but the test writers can create some excellent answer choices that are wrong. Don't pick an answer just because it sounds right, or you believe it to be true. It **MUST** answer the question. Once you've made your selection, always go back and check it against the question and make sure that you didn't misread the question, and the answer choice does answer the question posed.

### ***Benchmark***

After you read the first answer choice, decide if you think it sounds correct or not. If it doesn't, move on to the next answer choice. If it does, mentally mark that

answer choice. This doesn't mean that you've definitely selected it as your answer choice, it just means that it's the best you've seen thus far. Go ahead and read the next choice. If the next choice is worse than the one you've already selected, keep going to the next answer choice. If the next choice is better than the choice you've already selected, mentally mark the new answer choice as your best guess.

The first answer choice that you select becomes your standard. Every other answer choice must be benchmarked against that standard. That choice is correct until proven otherwise by another answer choice beating it out. Once you've decided that no other answer choice seems as good, do one final check to ensure that your answer choice answers the question posed.

### ***Valid Information***

Don't discount any of the information provided in the question. Every piece of information may be necessary to determine the correct answer. None of the information in the question is there to throw you off (while the answer choices will certainly have information to throw you off). If two seemingly unrelated topics are discussed, don't ignore either. You can be confident there is a relationship, or it wouldn't be included in the question, and you are probably going to have to determine what is that relationship to find the answer.

### ***Avoid "Fact Traps"***

Don't get distracted by a choice that is factually true. Your search is for the answer that answers the question. Stay focused and don't fall for an answer that is true but incorrect. Always go back to the question and make sure you're choosing an answer that actually answers the question and is not just a true statement. An answer can be factually correct, but it **MUST** answer the question asked. Additionally, two answers can both be seemingly correct, so be sure to read all of the answer choices, and make sure that you get the one that **BEST** answers the question.

### ***Milk the Question***

Some of the questions may throw you completely off. They might deal with a subject you have not been exposed to, or one that you haven't reviewed in years. While your lack of knowledge about the subject will be a hindrance, the question itself can give you many clues that will help you find the correct answer. Read the question carefully and look for clues. Watch particularly for adjectives and nouns describing difficult terms or words that you don't recognize. Regardless of if you completely understand a word or not, replacing it with a synonym either provided or one you more familiar with may help you to understand what the questions are asking. Rather than wracking your mind about specific detailed information concerning a difficult term or word, try to use mental substitutes that are easier to understand.

### ***The Trap of Familiarity***

Don't just choose a word because you recognize it. On difficult questions, you may not recognize a number of words in the answer choices. The test writers don't put "make-believe" words on the test; so don't think that just because you only recognize all the words in one answer choice means that answer choice must be correct. If you only recognize words in one answer choice, then focus on that one. Is it correct? Try your best to determine if it is correct. If it is, that is great, but if it doesn't, eliminate it. Each word and answer choice you eliminate increases your chances of getting the question correct, even if you then have to guess among the unfamiliar choices.

### ***Eliminate Answers***

Eliminate choices as soon as you realize they are wrong. But be careful! Make sure you consider all of the possible answer choices. Just because one appears right, doesn't mean that the next one won't be even better! The test writers will usually put more than one good answer choice for every question, so read all of them. Don't worry if you are stuck between two that seem right. By getting down

to just two remaining possible choices, your odds are now 50/50. Rather than wasting too much time, play the odds. You are guessing, but guessing wisely, because you've been able to knock out some of the answer choices that you know are wrong. If you are eliminating choices and realize that the last answer choice you are left with is also obviously wrong, don't panic. Start over and consider each choice again. There may easily be something that you missed the first time and will realize on the second pass.

### ***Tough Questions***

If you are stumped on a problem or it appears too hard or too difficult, don't waste time. Move on! Remember though, if you can quickly check for obviously incorrect answer choices, your chances of guessing correctly are greatly improved. Before you completely give up, at least try to knock out a couple of possible answers. Eliminate what you can and then guess at the remaining answer choices before moving on.

### ***Brainstorm***

If you get stuck on a difficult question, spend a few seconds quickly brainstorming. Run through the complete list of possible answer choices. Look at each choice and ask yourself, "Could this answer the question satisfactorily?" Go through each answer choice and consider it independently of the other. By systematically going through all possibilities, you may find something that you would otherwise overlook. Remember that when you get stuck, it's important to try to keep moving.

### ***Read Carefully***

Understand the problem. Read the question and answer choices carefully. Don't miss the question because you misread the terms. You have plenty of time to read each question thoroughly and make sure you understand what is being asked. Yet a happy medium must be attained, so don't waste too much time. You must read carefully, but efficiently.

### **Face Value**

When in doubt, use common sense. Always accept the situation in the problem at face value. Don't read too much into it. These problems will not require you to make huge leaps of logic. The test writers aren't trying to throw you off with a cheap trick. If you have to go beyond creativity and make a leap of logic in order to have an answer choice answer the question, then you should look at the other answer choices. Don't overcomplicate the problem by creating theoretical relationships or explanations that will warp time or space. These are normal problems rooted in reality. It's just that the applicable relationship or explanation may not be readily apparent and you have to figure things out. Use your common sense to interpret anything that isn't clear.

### **Prefixes**

If you're having trouble with a word in the question or answer choices, try dissecting it. Take advantage of every clue that the word might include. Prefixes and suffixes can be a huge help. Usually they allow you to determine a basic meaning. Pre- means before, post- means after, pro - is positive, de- is negative. From these prefixes and suffixes, you can get an idea of the general meaning of the word and try to put it into context. Beware though of any traps. Just because con is the opposite of pro, doesn't necessarily mean congress is the opposite of progress!

### **Hedge Phrases**

Watch out for critical "hedge" phrases, such as likely, may, can, will often, sometimes, often, almost, mostly, usually, generally, rarely, sometimes. Question writers insert these hedge phrases to cover every possibility. Often an answer choice will be wrong simply because it leaves no room for exception. Avoid answer choices that have definitive words like "exactly," and "always".

### ***Switchback Words***

Stay alert for “switchbacks”. These are the words and phrases frequently used to alert you to shifts in thought. The most common switchback word is “but”.

Others include although, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, even though, while, in spite of, despite, regardless of.

### ***New Information***

Correct answer choices will rarely have completely new information included. Answer choices typically are straightforward reflections of the material asked about and will directly relate to the question. If a new piece of information is included in an answer choice that doesn't even seem to relate to the topic being asked about, then that answer choice is likely incorrect. All of the information needed to answer the question is usually provided for you, and so you should not have to make guesses that are unsupported or choose answer choices that require unknown information that cannot be reasoned on its own.

### ***Time Management***

On technical questions, don't get lost on the technical terms. Don't spend too much time on any one question. If you don't know what a term means, then since you don't have a dictionary, odds are you aren't going to get much further. You should immediately recognize terms as whether or not you know them. If you don't, work with the other clues that you have, the other answer choices and terms provided, but don't waste too much time trying to figure out a difficult term.

### ***Contextual Clues***

Look for contextual clues. An answer can be right but not correct. The contextual clues will help you find the answer that is most right and is correct. Understand the context in which a phrase or statement is made. This will help you make important distinctions.

### ***Don't Panic***

Panicking will not answer any questions for you. Therefore, it isn't helpful. When you first see the question, if your mind goes blank, take a deep breath. Force yourself to mechanically go through the steps of solving the problem and using the strategies you've learned.

### ***Pace Yourself***

Don't get clock fever. It's easy to be overwhelmed when you're looking at a page full of questions, your mind is full of random thoughts and feeling confused, and the clock is ticking down faster than you would like. Calm down and maintain the pace that you have set for yourself. As long as you are on track by monitoring your pace, you are guaranteed to have enough time for yourself. When you get to the last few minutes of the test, it may seem like you won't have enough time left, but if you only have as many questions as you should have left at that point, then you're right on track!

### ***Answer Selection***

The best way to pick an answer choice is to eliminate all of those that are wrong, until only one is left and confirm that is the correct answer. Sometimes though, an answer choice may immediately look right. Be careful! Take a second to make sure that the other choices are not equally obvious. Don't make a hasty mistake. There are only two times that you should stop before checking other answers. First is when you are positive that the answer choice you have selected is correct. Second is when time is almost out and you have to make a quick guess!

### ***Check Your Work***

Since you will probably not know every term listed and the answer to every question, it is important that you get credit for the ones that you do know. Don't miss any questions through careless mistakes. If at all possible, try to take a second to look back over your answer selection and make sure you've selected

the correct answer choice and haven't made a costly careless mistake (such as marking an answer choice that you didn't mean to mark). This quick double check should more than pay for itself in caught mistakes for the time it costs.

### ***Beware of Directly Quoted Answers***

Sometimes an answer choice will repeat word for word a portion of the question or reference section. However, beware of such exact duplication – it may be a trap! More than likely, the correct choice will paraphrase or summarize a point, rather than being exactly the same wording.

### ***Slang***

Scientific sounding answers are better than slang ones. An answer choice that begins "To compare the outcomes..." is much more likely to be correct than one that begins "Because some people insisted..."

### ***Extreme Statements***

Avoid wild answers that throw out highly controversial ideas that are proclaimed as established fact. An answer choice that states the "process should be used in certain situations, if..." is much more likely to be correct than one that states the "process should be discontinued completely." The first is a calm rational statement and doesn't even make a definitive, uncompromising stance, using a hedge word "if" to provide wiggle room, whereas the second choice is a radical idea and far more extreme.

### ***Answer Choice Families***

When you have two or more answer choices that are direct opposites or parallels, one of them is usually the correct answer. For instance, if one answer choice states "x increases" and another answer choice states "x decreases" or "y increases," then those two or three answer choices are very similar in construction and fall into the same family of answer choices. A family of answer choices is when two or three answer choices are very similar in construction, and

yet often have a directly opposite meaning. Usually the correct answer choice will be in that family of answer choices. The “odd man out” or answer choice that doesn’t seem to fit the parallel construction of the other answer choices is more likely to be incorrect.

## ***The Listening Module***

The Listening module of the IELTS consists of a total of 40 questions.

There are four sections:

1. Social Needs – Conversation between two speakers
2. Social Needs – Speech by one speaker
3. Educational or Training – Conversation between up to four speakers
4. Educational or Training – Speech by one speaker

### ***Main Ideas***

Important words and main ideas in conversation are ones that will come up again and again. Listen carefully for any word or words that come up repeatedly. What words come up in nearly every statement made? These words with high frequency are likely to be in the main idea of the conversation. For example, in a conversation about class size in the business department of a college, the term “class size” is likely to appear in nearly every statement made by either speaker in the discussion.

### ***Voice Changes***

IELTS expects you to be able to recognize and interpret nuances of speech. Be on the alert for any changes in voice, which might register surprise, excitement, or another emotion. If a speaker is talking in a normal monotone voice and suddenly raises their voice to a high pitch, that is a huge clue that something critical is being stated. Listen for a speaker to change their voice and understand the meaning of what they are saying.

Example:

Man: Let's go to Wal-mart.

Woman: *There's a Wal-mart in this small town?*

If the woman's statement was higher pitched, indicating surprise and shock, then she probably did not expect there to be a Wal-mart in that town.

### ***Specifics***

Listen carefully for specific pieces of information. Adjectives are commonly asked about in IELTS questions. Try to remember any main adjectives that are mentioned. Pick out adjectives such as numbers, colors, or sizes.

Example:

Man: Let's go to the store and get some apples to make the pie.

Woman: How many do we need?

Man: We'll need **five** apples to make the pie.

A typical question might be about how many apples were needed.

### ***Interpret***

As you are listening to the conversation, put yourself in the person's shoes. Think about why someone would make a statement. You'll need to do more than just regurgitate the spoken words but also interpret them.

Example:

Woman: I think I'm sick with the flu.

Man: Why don't you go see the campus doctor?

Sample Question: Why did the man mention the campus doctor?

Answer: The campus doctor would be able to determine if the woman had the flu.

### ***Find the Hidden Meaning***

Look for the meaning behind a statement. When a speaker answers a question with a statement that doesn't immediately seem to answer the question, the response probably contained a hidden meaning that you will need to recognize and explain.

Man: Are you going to be ready for your presentation?

Woman: I've only got half of it finished and it's taken me five hours just to do this much. There's only an hour left before the presentation is due.

At first, the woman did not seem to answer the question the man presented. She responded with a statement that only seemed loosely related. Once you look deeper, then you can find the true meaning of what she said. If it took the woman five hours to do the first half of the presentation, then it would logically take her another five hours to do the second half. Since she only has one hour until her presentation is due, she would probably NOT be able to be ready for the presentation. So, while an answer was not immediately visible to the man's question, when you applied some logic to her response, you could find the hidden meaning beneath.

### ***Memory Enhancers***

You have scratch paper provided to you while taking the test. This can be a huge help. While you listen, you are free to make notes. If different people are talking, use short hand to describe the main characteristics of each speaker. As you hear main adjectives that you think might be hard to remember, jot them down quickly in order that you can refer to them later during the question stage. Use your notes to help you remember those hard to remember facts. Don't end your test without making use of your scratch paper ally.

Example:

Speaker 1: I'm Bob Thomas, and I'm majoring in business development.

Speaker 2: I'm Matt Smith, and I'm majoring in chemical engineering.

Speaker 3: I'm John Douglass, and I'm majoring in speech therapy.

Your short hand might read:

Bob – Bus.

Matt – Chem. E

John – Sp. Th.

On subsequent questions about the characters, you'll be able to remember these basic facts and answer more accurately. However, don't spend so much time making notes that you miss something on the tape. You won't be able to rewind it and catch what you miss. The idea is that the notes should only supplement your memory, not replace it.

## ***The Reading Module***

The Reading module of the IELTS consists of a total of 40 questions.

There are three passages, with a total of 2,000 to 2,750 words.

### **Skimming**

Your first task when you begin reading is to answer the question “What is the topic of the selection?” This can best be answered by quickly skimming the passage for the general idea, stopping to read only the first sentence of each paragraph. A paragraph’s first sentence is usually the main topic sentence, and it gives you a summary of the content of the paragraph.

Once you’ve skimmed the passage, stopping to read only the first sentences, you will have a general idea about what it is about, as well as what is the expected topic in each paragraph.

Each question will contain clues as to where to find the answer in the passage. Do not just randomly search through the passage for the correct answer to each question. Search scientifically. Find key word(s) or ideas in the question that are going to either contain or be near the correct answer. These are typically nouns, verbs, numbers, or phrases in the question that will probably be duplicated in the passage. Once you have identified those key word(s) or idea, skim the passage quickly to find where those key word(s) or idea appears. The correct answer choice will be nearby.

Example: What caused Martin to suddenly return to Paris?

The key word is Paris. Skim the passage quickly to find where this word appears. The answer will be close by that word.

However, sometimes key words in the question are not repeated in the passage. In those cases, search for the general idea of the question.

Example: Which of the following was the psychological impact of the author's childhood upon the remainder of his life?

Key words are "childhood" or "psychology". While searching for those words, be alert for other words or phrases that have similar meaning, such as "emotional effect" or "mentally" which could be used in the passage, rather than the exact word "psychology".

Numbers or years can be particularly good key words to skim for, as they stand out from the rest of the text.

Example: Which of the following best describes the influence of Monet's work in the 20th century?

20th contains numbers and will easily stand out from the rest of the text. Use 20th as the key word to skim for in the passage.

Once you've quickly found the correct section of the passage to find the answer, focus upon the answer choices. Sometimes a choice will repeat word for word a portion of the passage near the answer. However, beware of such duplication – it may be a trap! More than likely, the correct choice will paraphrase or summarize the related portion of the passage, rather than being exactly the same wording.

For the answers that you think are correct, read them carefully and make sure that they answer the question. An answer can be factually correct, but it **MUST** answer the question asked. Additionally, two answers can both be seemingly

correct, so be sure to read all of the answer choices, and make sure that you get the one that BEST answers the question.

Some questions will not have a key word.

Example: Which of the following would the author of this passage likely agree with?

In these cases, look for key words in the answer choices. Then skim the passage to find where the answer choice occurs. By skimming to find where to look, you can minimize the time required.

Sometimes it may be difficult to identify a good key word in the question to skim for in the passage. In those cases, look for a key word in one of the answer choices to skim for. Often the answer choices can all be found in the same paragraph, which can quickly narrow your search.

### **Paragraph Focus**

Focus upon the first sentence of each paragraph, which is the most important. The main topic of the paragraph is usually there.

Once you've read the first sentence in the paragraph, you have a general idea about what each paragraph will be about. As you read the questions, try to determine which paragraph will have the answer. Paragraphs have a concise topic. The answer should either obviously be there or obviously not. It will save time if you can jump straight to the paragraph, so try to remember what you learned from the first sentences.

Example: The first paragraph is about poets; the second is about poetry. If a question asks about poetry, where will the answer be? The second paragraph.

The main idea of a passage is typically spread across all or most of its paragraphs. Whereas the main idea of a paragraph may be completely different than the main idea of the very next paragraph, a main idea for a passage affects all of the paragraphs in one form or another.

Example: What is the main idea of the passage?

For each answer choice, try to see how many paragraphs are related. It can help to count how many sentences are affected by each choice, but it is best to see how many paragraphs are affected by the choice. Typically the answer choices will include incorrect choices that are main ideas of individual paragraphs, but not the entire passage. That is why it is crucial to choose ideas that are supported by the most paragraphs possible.

### **Eliminate Choices**

Some choices can quickly be eliminated. “Andy Warhol lived there.” Is Andy Warhol even mentioned in the article? If not, quickly eliminate it.

When trying to answer a question such as “the passage indicates all of the following EXCEPT” quickly skim the paragraph searching for references to each choice. If the reference exists, scratch it off as a choice. Similar choices may be crossed off simultaneously if they are close enough.

In choices that ask you to choose “which answer choice does NOT describe?” or “all of the following answer choices are identifiable characteristics, EXCEPT which?” look for answers that are similarly worded. Since only one answer can be correct, if there are two answers that appear to mean the same thing, they must BOTH be incorrect, and can be eliminated.

Example:

- A.) changing values and attitudes
- B.) a large population of mobile or uprooted people

These answer choices are similar; they both describe a fluid culture. Because of their similarity, they can be linked together. Since the answer can have only one choice, they can also be eliminated together.

## **Contextual Clues**

Look for contextual clues. An answer can be right but not correct. The contextual clues will help you find the answer that is most right and is correct. Understand the context in which a phrase is stated.

When asked for the implied meaning of a statement made in the passage, immediately go find the statement and read the context it was made in. Also, look for an answer choice that has a similar phrase to the statement in question. Example: In the passage, what is implied by the phrase “Churches have become more or less part of the furniture”?

Find an answer choice that is similar or describes the phrase “part of the furniture” as that is the key phrase in the question. “Part of the furniture” is a saying that means something is fixed, immovable, or set in their ways. Those are all similar ways of saying “part of the furniture.” As such, the correct answer choice will probably include a similar rewording of the expression.

Example: Why was John described as “morally desperate”.

The answer will probably have some sort of definition of morals in it. “Morals” refers to a code of right and wrong behavior, so the correct answer choice will likely have words that mean something like that.

## **Fact/Opinion**

When asked about which statement is a fact or opinion, remember that answer choices that are facts will typically have no ambiguous words. For example, how long is a long time? What defines an ordinary person? These ambiguous words

of “long” and “ordinary” should not be in a factual statement. However, if all of the choices have ambiguous words, go to the context of the passage. Often a factual statement may be set out as a research finding.

Example: “The scientist found that the eye reacts quickly to change in light.”

Opinions may be set out in the context of words like thought, believed, understood, or wished.

Example: “He thought the Yankees should win the World Series.”

### **Opposites**

Answer choices that are direct opposites are usually correct. The paragraph will often contain established relationships (when this goes up, that goes down). The question may ask you to draw conclusions for this and will give two similar answer choices that are opposites.

Example:

- A.) if other factors are held constant, then increasing the interest rate will lead to a decrease in housing starts
- B.) if other factors are held constant, then increasing the interest rate will lead to an increase in housing starts

Often these opposites will not be so clearly recognized. Don't be thrown off by different wording, look for the meaning beneath. Notice how these two answer choices are really opposites, with just a slight change in the wording shown above. Once you realize these are opposites, you should examine them closely. One of these two is likely to be the correct answer.

Example:

- A.) if other factors are held constant, then increasing the interest rate will lead to a decrease in housing starts
- B.) when there is an increase in housing starts, and other things remaining equal, it is often the result of an increase in interest rates

### ***Make Predictions***

As you read and understand the passage and then the question, try to guess what the answer will be. Remember that most of the answer choices are wrong, and once you begin reading them, your mind will immediately become cluttered with answer choices designed to throw you off. Your mind is typically the most focused immediately after you have read the passage and question and digested its contents. If you can, try to predict what the correct answer will be. You may be surprised at what you can predict.

Quickly scan the choices and see if your prediction is in the listed answer choices. If it is, then you can be quite confident that you have the right answer. It still won't hurt to check the other answer choices, but most of the time, you've got it!

### ***Answer the Question***

It may seem obvious to only pick answer choices that answer the question, but IELTS can create some excellent answer choices that are wrong. Don't pick an answer just because it sounds right, or you believe it to be true. It **MUST** answer the question. Once you've made your selection, always go back and check it against the question and make sure that you didn't misread the question, and the answer choice does answer the question posed.

### ***Benchmark***

After you read the first answer choice, decide if you think it sounds correct or not. If it doesn't, move on to the next answer choice. If it does, make a mental note about that choice. This doesn't mean that you've definitely selected it as your answer choice, it just means that it's the best you've seen thus far. Go ahead and read the next choice. If the next choice is worse than the one you've already selected, keep going to the next answer choice. If the next choice is better than the choice you've already selected, then make a mental note about that answer choice.

As you read through the list, you are mentally noting the choice you think is right. That is your new standard. Every other answer choice must be benchmarked against that standard. That choice is correct until proven otherwise by another answer choice beating it out. Once you've decided that no other answer choice seems as good, do one final check to ensure that it answers the question posed.

***New Information***

Correct answers will usually contain the information listed in the paragraph and question. Rarely will completely new information be inserted into a correct answer choice. Occasionally the new information may be related in a manner than IELTS is asking for you to interpret, but seldom.

Example:

The argument above is dependent upon which of the following assumptions?  
A.) Scientists have used Charles's Law to interpret the relationship.

If Charles's Law is not mentioned at all in the referenced paragraph and argument, then it is unlikely that this choice is correct. All of the information needed to answer the question is provided for you, and so you should not have to make guesses that are unsupported or choose answer choices that have unknown information that cannot be reasoned.

***Key Words***

Look for answer choices that have the same key words in them as the question.

Example:

Which of the following, if true, would best explain the reluctance of politicians since 1980 to support this funding?

Look for the key words "since 1980" to be referenced in the correct answer choice. Most valid answer choices would probably include a phrase such as "since 1980, politicians have..."

### ***Valid Information***

Don't discount any of the information provided in the passage, particularly shorter ones. Every piece of information may be necessary to determine the correct answer. None of the information in the passage is there to throw you off (while the answer choices will certainly have information to throw you off). If two seemingly unrelated topics are discussed, don't ignore either. You can be confident there is a relationship, or it wouldn't be included in the passage, and you are probably going to have to determine what is that relationship for the answer.

## **Time Management**

In technical passages, do not get lost on the technical terms. Skip them and move on. You want a general understanding of what is going on, not a mastery of the passage.

When you encounter material in the selection that seems difficult to understand, it often may not be necessary and can be skipped. Only spend time trying to understand it if it is going to be relevant for a question. Understand difficult phrases only as a last resort.

Identify each question by type. Usually the wording of a question will tell you whether you can find the answer by referring directly to the passage or by using your reasoning powers. You alone know which question types you customarily handle with ease and which give you trouble and will require more time.

## **Final Warnings**

### ***Hedge Phrases Revisited***

Once again, watch out for critical "hedge" phrases, such as likely, may, can, will often, sometimes, etc, often, almost, mostly, usually, generally, rarely, sometimes. Question writers insert these hedge phrases, to cover every

possibility. Often an answer will be wrong simply because it leaves no room for exception.

Example: Animals live longer in cold places than animals in warm places.

This answer choice is wrong, because there are exceptions in which certain warm climate animals live longer. This answer choice leaves no possibility of exception. It states that every animal species in cold places live longer than animal species in warm places. Correct answer choices will typically have a key hedge word to leave room for exceptions.

Example: In severe cold, a polar bear cub is likely to survive longer than an adult polar bear.

This answer choice is correct, because not only does the passage imply that younger animals survive better in the cold, it also allows for exceptions to exist. The use of the word “likely” leaves room for cases in which a polar bear cub might not survive longer than the adult polar bear.

### ***Word Usage Questions***

When asked how a word is used in the passage, don’t use your existing knowledge of the word. The question is being asked precisely because there is some strange or unusual usage of the word in the passage. Go to the passage and use contextual clues to determine the answer. Don’t simply use the popular definition you already know.

### ***Switchback Words***

Stay alert for “switchbacks”. These are the words and phrases frequently used to alert you to shifts in thought. The most common switchback word is “but”.

Others include although, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, even though, while, in spite of, despite, regardless of.

***Avoid “Fact Traps”***

Once you know which paragraph the answer will be in, focus on that paragraph. However, don't get distracted by a choice that is factually true about the paragraph. Your search is for the answer that answers the question, which may be about a tiny aspect in the paragraph. Stay focused and don't fall for an answer that describes the larger picture of the paragraph. Always go back to the question and make sure you're choosing an answer that actually answers the question and is not just a true statement.

## ***The Writing Module***

The Writing module of the IELTS consists of a 60 minute module with two tasks.

Task 1: A diagram or table will be presented to you and you must write out approximately a 150 word discussion on it within approximately 20 minutes. You must evaluate the diagram or table, organize your ideas, and develop them into a cohesive and coherent explanation.

Task 2: A topic will be presented to you and you must write out approximately a 250 word discussion on it within approximately 40 minutes. There is not a “correct” answer to the topic. You must evaluate the topic, organize your ideas, and develop them into a cohesive and coherent response.

You will be scored on how well you are able to utilize standard written English, organize and explain your thoughts, and support those thoughts with reasons and examples.

### ***Brainstorm***

Spend the first three to five minutes brainstorming out ideas. Write down any ideas you might have on the topic or table. The purpose is to extract from the recesses of your memory any relevant information. In this stage, anything goes down. Write down any idea, regardless of how good it may initially seem. You can use either the scratch paper provided or the word processor to quickly jot down your thoughts and ideas. The word processor is highly recommended though, particularly if you are a fast typist.

### ***Strength through Diversity***

The best papers will contain diversity of examples and reasoning. As you brainstorm consider different perspectives. Not only are there two sides to every issue, but there are also countless perspectives that can be considered. On any

issue, different groups are impacted, with many reaching the same conclusion or position, but through vastly different paths. Try to “see” the issue through as many different eyes as you can. Look at it from every angle and from every vantage point. The more diverse the reasoning used, the more balanced the paper will become and the better the score.

Example:

The issue of free trade is not just two sided. It impacts politicians, domestic (US) manufacturers, foreign manufacturers, the US economy, the world economy, strategic alliances, retailers, wholesalers, consumers, unions, workers, and the exchange of more than just goods, but also of ideas, beliefs, and cultures. The more of these angles that you can approach the issue from, the more solid your reasoning and the stronger your position.

Furthermore, don’t just use information as to how the issue impacts other people. Draw liberally from your own experience and your own observations. Explain a personal experience that you have had and your own emotions from that moment. Anything that you’ve seen in your community or observed in society can be expanded upon to further round out your position on the issue.

#### ***Pick a Main Idea***

Once you have finished with your creative flow, stop and review it. Which idea were you able to come up with the most supporting information? It’s extremely important that you pick an angle that will allow you to have a thorough and comprehensive coverage of the topic or table. This is not about your personal convictions, but about writing a concise rational discussion of an idea.

#### ***Weed the Garden***

Every garden of ideas gets weeds in it. The ideas that you brainstormed over are going to be random pieces of information of mixed value. Go through it methodically and pick out the ones that are the best. The best ideas are strong points that it will be easy to write a few sentences or a paragraph about.

### ***Create a Logical Flow***

Now that you know which ideas you are going to use and focus upon, organize them. Put your writing points in a logical order. You have your main ideas that you will focus on, and must align them in a sequence that will flow in a smooth, sensible path from point to point, so that the reader will go smoothly from one idea to the next in a logical path. Readers must have a sense of continuity as they read your paper. You don't want to have a paper that rambles back and forth.

### ***Start Your Engines***

You have a logical flow of main ideas with which to start writing. Begin expanding on the issues in the sequence that you have set for yourself. Pace yourself. Don't spend too much time on any one of the ideas that you are expanding upon. You want to have time for all of them. Make sure you watch your time. If you have twenty minutes left to write out your ideas and you have ten ideas, then you can only use two minutes per idea. It can be a daunting task to cram a lot of information down in words in a short amount of time, but if you pace yourself, you can get through it all. If you find that you are falling behind, speed up. Move through each idea more quickly, spending less time to expand upon the idea in order to catch back up.

Once you finish expanding on each idea, go back to your brainstorming session up above, where you wrote out your ideas. Go ahead and erase the ideas as you write about them. This will let you see what you need to write about next, and also allow you to pace yourself and see what you have left to cover.

### ***First Paragraph***

Your first paragraph should have several easily identifiable features. First, it should have a quick description or paraphrasing of the topic or table. Use your own words to briefly explain what the topic or table is about.

Second, you should explain your opinion of the topic or table and give an explanation of why you feel that way. What is your decision or conclusion on the topic or table?

Third, you should list your “writing points”. What are the main ideas that you came up with earlier? This is your opportunity to outline the rest of your paper. Have a sentence explaining each idea that you will go into further depth in additional paragraphs. If someone was to only read this paragraph, they should be able to get an “executive summary” of the entire paper.

### ***Body Paragraph***

Each of your successive paragraphs should expand upon one of the points listed in the main paragraph. Use your personal experience and knowledge to support each of your points. Examples should back up everything.

### ***Conclusion Paragraph***

Once you have finished expanding upon each of your main points, wrap it up. Summarize what you have said and covered in a conclusion paragraph. Explain once more your opinion of the topic or table and quickly review why you feel that way. At this stage, you have already backed up your statements, so there is no need to do that again. All you are doing is refreshing in the mind of the reader the main points that you have made.

### ***Don't Panic***

Panicking will not put down any more words on paper for you. Therefore, it isn't helpful. When you first see the topic or table, if your mind goes as blank as the page on which you have to write your paper, take a deep breath. Force yourself to mechanically go through the steps listed above.

Secondly, don't get clock fever. It's easy to be overwhelmed when you're looking at a page that doesn't seem to have much text, there is a lot of blank space further down, your mind is full of random thoughts and feeling confused, and the clock is ticking down faster than you would like. You brainstormed first so that

you don't have to keep coming up with ideas. If you're running out of time and you have a lot of ideas that you haven't expanded upon, don't be afraid to make some cuts. Start picking the best ideas that you have left and expand on those few. Don't feel like you have to write down and expand all of your ideas.

### ***Check Your Work***

It is more important to have a shorter paper that is well written and well organized, than a longer paper that is poorly written and poorly organized. Remember though that you will be penalized for answers shorter than the required minimum limit. Don't keep writing about a subject just to add words and sentences, and certainly don't start repeating yourself. Expand on the ideas that you identified in the brainstorming session and make sure that you save yourself a few minutes at the end to go back and check your work.

Leave time at the end, at least three minutes, to go back and check over your work. Reread and make sure that everything you've written makes sense and flows. Clean up any spelling or grammar mistakes that you might have made. If you see anything that needs to be moved around, such as a paragraph that would fit in better somewhere else, cut and paste it to that new location. Also, go ahead and erase any brainstorming ideas that you weren't able to expand upon and clean up any other extraneous information that you might have written that doesn't fit into your paper.

As you proofread, make sure there aren't any fragments or run-ons. Check for sentences that are too short or too long. If the sentence is too short, look to see if you have an identifiable subject and verb. If it is too long, break it up into two separate sentences. Watch out for any "big" words you may have used. It's good to use difficult vocabulary words, but only if you are positive that you are using them correctly. Your paper has to be correct, it doesn't have to be fancy. You're not trying to impress anyone with your vocabulary, just your ability to develop and express ideas.

### **Shortcut Keys**

If you're taking the IELTS on the computer, spend some time on your keyboard getting familiar with the shortcut keys to cut, copy, and paste. It will help you to quickly move text around on your paper. First highlight the text you wish to move or copy and then type:

Ctrl+C = copy

Ctrl+X = cut

Ctrl+V = paste

You must hold down the ctrl key and then tap the "c", "x", or "v" key to perform the desired function.

### **Final Note**

Depending on your test taking preferences and personality, the essay writing will probably be your hardest or your easiest section. You are required to go through the entire process of writing a paper very quickly, which can be quite a challenge.

Focus upon each of the steps listed above. Go through the process of creative flow first, generating ideas and thoughts about the topic or table. Then organize those ideas into a smooth logical flow. Pick out the ones that are best from the list you have created. Decide which main idea or angle of the topic or table you will discuss.

Create a recognizable structure in your paper, with an introductory paragraph explaining what you have decided upon, and what your main points will be. Use the body paragraphs to expand on those main points and have a conclusion that wraps up the topic or table.

Save a few moments to go back and review what you have written. Clean up any minor mistakes that you might have had and give it those last few critical

touches that can make a huge difference. Finally, be proud and confident of what you have written!

## ***The Speaking Module***

The Speaking Module of the IELTS consists of a 60 minute module with three parts.

### ***Part 1***

You will need to answer general questions about yourself, your homes/families, your jobs/studies, your interests, and a range of familiar topic areas in four to five minutes.

### ***Part 2***

You will be given a verbal prompt on a card and asked to speak about a particular topic (listed on the card). You will have one minute to prepare before speaking at length, and will need to speak between one and two minutes. Then the examiner will ask you one or two follow up questions.

### ***Part 3***

You and the examiner will engage in a discussion of more abstract concepts and issues which will be linked to the topic you discussed in Part 2. The discussion will last between four and five minutes.

You will be scored on how well you are able to communicate effectively in English.

Of all the test modules on IELTS, this is the easiest to prepare for. This is the test module that you can practice anywhere, in your car, in your room, on the phone, by yourself or with someone else. After you successfully pass IELTS, you will be speaking English a lot, so you might as well prepare by speaking it at every opportunity beforehand.

### ***Exhausting the Possibilities***

Part 1 will ask basic questions. There are only so many possible basic questions that can be asked about someone. You can easily be prepared for every possibility. Go through and write down all the possibilities and a good answer for each. When you're asked about your family, don't have to struggle to come up with descriptions for your family members. Practice ahead of time and know what you're going to say. Right now as you're reading this, stop and take a minute to answer each of these following questions. If you were asked these in an interview, what would you say?

1. Please describe yourself.
2. Please describe your family.
3. Please describe your home.
4. Please describe some of your interests.
5. Please describe your job.
6. Please describe your studies

This is important practice. Make sure that you can spend a minute or so answering each of these questions without having to take time to think of a good response. These are basic questions and you should have your basic answers ready.

### ***Tell a Story***

Movie making is a multi-billion dollar industry. Why? It's because everyone likes to hear a good story, and the best movies contain great stories. The Speaking Module interview can be a big aggravation for both sides. Usually, it is tense, uncomfortable, and boring for both the interviewer and the test taker.

Think about your favorite relatives. In many cases, they are your favorite because they are such raconteurs, or good storytellers. These are your aunts and uncles that can turn a simple trip to the grocery store into high adventure and will keep you captivated and entertained. Even if you're not a natural storyteller,

with a little thought and practice, even you can turn your dull past experiences into exciting exploits.

Stories are your strongest weapon for captivating the interviewer and demonstrating your mastery of speaking English. The questions in Part 2 of the Speaking Module literally beg for stories to be told. These need to be compelling stories, real time drama, and you're the hero. You want the interviewer begging for more, asking follow-up questions, eager to hear how it ends. Once you begin a quick exciting story, you set the tone of the interview, and you will determine what will be the follow-up questions.

The easiest way to prepare for these Part 2 questions is to scour your memory for any exciting instance in your past. Perhaps where you played a leadership role or accomplished a goal. These can be from any part of your past, during your education, at home with your family, projects at work, or anything that you might have had a part in. Identify the main characteristics of the story, you want to have things straight. Make sure you know the basics of what happened, who was involved, why it occurred, and how the events unfolded sequentially. You certainly don't want to stumble over the facts and repeat yourself during the interview.

### ***One Size Fits All***

These basic stories are building blocks. Just as a piece of lumber can be cut into many different shapes and have many completely unique uses, each of your stories does not only answer one unique question. Your stories are one size fits all. With practice you will find that you can use the same story to answer two seemingly unrelated questions.

For example, a question about teamwork and working under pressure can both be answered by a story about your experience playing intramural basketball. The story could describe how you had to work as a team in order to get into the

playoffs, spending time practicing together, coordinating plays, whatever was necessary for the team to advance. Alternatively, the story could focus upon the clutch shots that you made that season in order to win the game in the last few seconds of play under enormous pressure. The basic story is the same: your experiences playing basketball.

The questions were different, but you customized the story to fit the question. With practice you should be able to answer almost any question with just a few stock stories that can be customized.

### ***Find the Bridges***

Some questions will lend themselves more readily to a story than others. You must have a set of basic stories ready that can be modified to fit the occasion. You must “find the bridges” in the questions offered to make sure your stories get told.

In WWII, the US Army used Bailey bridges. Bailey bridges were bridges made of prefabricated steel sections that were carried around and could be thrown together at a moment’s notice, allowing the army to move quickly across any obstacle and get to where they wanted to go.

You need to find bridges, i.e. opportunities to tell your stories. Look for any chance to turn a standard question about anything, into a bridge to begin telling your story. For example, “What is your job title?”

On the surface that might not seem like the ideal bridge, but with a little insight your response might become:

“My job title is Product Line Manager. I was responsible for everything from the development of new products, to the obsolescence of old products. Marketing, sales, engineering, and production of the entire product line fell under my

responsibility. One of the products was even my own idea based on feedback I received from my interactions with our customers. In the first year, it alone had achieved a sales level of over...”

The key to remember is that just because a question is asked as a closed ended question (yes/no, or one word answers), doesn't mean that you have to answer it as a closed ended question. Answer the question asked, but then find a way to develop your answer and a bridge to a good story of yours. With an open mind, the most closed ended of questions can become a launch pad into a story.

### ***Pregnant Pause***

A good story can usually wind its way down a long path. There is always a danger that you will begin to bore the interviewer, who may wonder if an end is in sight. Some interviewers may get worried that they won't be able to get through the fifteen questions on their list during the allotted time. Therefore, find natural breaks in your story and pause for a second. If the interviewer maintains eye contact or asks continuation questions, then keep going. But this will give them a chance to stop the story and ask a different question if they are getting bored and want to move on.

### ***Taking the Final Step***

By trying to answer each of your Part 2 questions with a basic story, you will be able to transition nicely into the final step, Part 3. Part 3 questions are based upon your answers to Part 2 questions and will be asked at the interviewer's discretion. By using the story techniques listed above, you will have already determined the path that the interviewer will take with his follow-up Part 3 questions. The interviewer will naturally ask questions that tie into your story and you will already be prepared for those questions and will ace Part 3 as easily as the others.

***Practice Makes Perfect***

Don't try to answer every question by shooting from the hip. You'll spend most of your time trying to think of what happened and repeating yourself. Think of the classic stories that you could tell and then practice going over them with your friends, explaining how you successfully achieved the goal, or took charge and gave leadership to your group project. You don't want to have the story memorized, because it will become stale in the telling, but you want it to be smooth. This story must be live and in living color, where the interviewer can see himself taking part on the sidelines and watching the situation take place. Have your friends and family members quiz you by asking you random questions and see how well you can adapt to the question and give a lucid response.

## ***Special Report: How Your IELTS Score is Viewed, and What This Means for You***

For your IELTS score, you will be grouped in one of nine bands.

<b>Band</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
9	Expert User	Fluent with complete understanding
8	Very Good User	Full operational command, occasional inaccuracies
7	Good User	Operational command, occasional inaccuracies
6	Competent User	Effective command, inaccuracies
5	Modest User	Partial command, many mistakes
4	Limited User	Limited command, frequent problems
3	Extremely Limited User	Only general understanding
2	Intermittent User	Only basic understanding with difficulty
1	Non User	No language ability
0	Did Not Take Test	N/A

If you are on the upper edge of one of these bands, it is definitely profitable to work your way into the next one by studying and practicing.

## ***Special Report: What Jobs Require Which IELTS Scores***

Below is a list of different jobs and what each IELTS score band means to that occupation. If you have a lower IELTS score, you might want to consider either studying more and trying to increase your score, or a less linguistically demanding position.

	Linguistically demanding academic courses	Linguistically less demanding academic courses	Linguistically demanding training courses	Linguistically less demanding training courses
Band	(Medicine, Law, Linguistics, Journalism, Library Studies)	(Agriculture, Pure Mathematics, Technology, Computer-based work, Telecommunications)	(Air Traffic Control, Engineering, Pure Applied Sciences, Industrial Safety)	(Animal Husbandry, Catering, Fire Services)
9.0-7.5	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
7.0	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
6.5	English Study Needed	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
6.0	English Study Needed	English Study Needed	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable
5.5	English Study Needed	English Study Needed	English Study Needed	Probably Acceptable

## ***Special Report: Which Additional Sources Are Worth Your Time***

We believe the following sources present uncommon value to our customers who wish to “really prepare” for their test. While our manual teaches valuable tricks and tips that no one else covers, these sources are also extremely helpful.

### **Practice Tests**

#### **[IELTS Practice Tests](http://www.testprepresearch.com/ielts)**

<http://www.testprepresearch.com/ielts>

## ***Special Report: What Your Test Score Will Tell You About Your IQ***

Did you know that most standardized tests correlate very strongly with IQ? In fact, your general intelligence is a better predictor of your success than any other factor, and most tests intentionally measure this trait to some degree to ensure that those selected by the test are truly qualified for the test's purposes.

Before we can delve into the relation between your test score and IQ, I will first have to explain what exactly is IQ. Here's the formula:

Your IQ = 100 + (Number of standard deviations below or above the average)\*15

Now, let's define standard deviations by using an example. If we have 5 people with 5 different heights, then first we calculate the average. Let's say the average was 65 inches. The standard deviation is the "average distance" away from the average of each of the members. It is a direct measure of variability - if the 5 people included Jackie Chan and Shaquille O'Neal, obviously there's a lot more variability in that group than a group of 5 sisters who are all within 6 inches in height of each other. The standard deviation uses a number to characterize the average range of difference within a group.

A convenient feature of most groups is that they have a "normal" distribution-makes sense that most things would be normal, right? Without getting into a bunch of statistical mumbo-jumbo, you just need to know that if you know the average of the group and the standard deviation, you can successfully predict someone's percentile rank in the group.

Confused? Let me give you an example. If instead of 5 people's heights, we had 100 people, we could figure out their rank in height JUST by knowing the

average, standard deviation, and their height. We wouldn't need to know each person's height and manually rank them, we could just predict their rank based on three numbers.

What this means is that you can take your PERCENTILE rank that is often given with your test and relate this to your RELATIVE IQ of people taking the test - that is, your IQ relative to the people taking the test. Obviously, there's no way to know your actual IQ because the people taking a standardized test are usually not very good samples of the general population- many of those with extremely low IQ's never achieve a level of success or competency necessary to complete a typical standardized test. In fact, professional psychologists who measure IQ actually have to use non-written tests that can fairly measure the IQ of those not able to complete a traditional test.

The bottom line is to not take your test score too seriously, but it is fun to compute your "relative IQ" among the people who took the test with you. I've done the calculations below. Just look up your percentile rank in the left and then you'll see your "relative IQ" for your test in the right hand column-

Percentile Rank	Your Relative IQ		Percentile Rank	Your Relative IQ
99	135		59	103
98	131		58	103
97	128		57	103
96	126		56	102
95	125		55	102
94	123		54	102
93	122		53	101
92	121		52	101
91	120		51	100
90	119		50	100
89	118		49	100
88	118		48	99
87	117		47	99
86	116		46	98
85	116		45	98
84	115		44	98

83	114		43	97
82	114		42	97
81	113		41	97
80	113		40	96
79	112		39	96
78	112		38	95
77	111		37	95
76	111		36	95
75	110		35	94
74	110		34	94
73	109		33	93
72	109		32	93
71	108		31	93
70	108		30	92
69	107		29	92
68	107		28	91
67	107		27	91
66	106		26	90
65	106		25	90
64	105		24	89
63	105		23	89
62	105		22	88
61	104		21	88
60	104		20	87

## ***Special Report: Retaking the Test: What Are Your Chances at Improving Your Score?***

After going through the experience of taking a major test, many test takers feel that once is enough. The test usually comes during a period of transition in the test taker's life, and taking the test is only one of a series of important events. With so many distractions and conflicting recommendations, it may be difficult for a test taker to rationally determine whether or not he should retake the test after viewing his scores.

The importance of the test usually only adds to the burden of the retake decision. However, don't be swayed by emotion. There are a few simple questions that you can ask yourself to guide you as you try to determine whether a retake would improve your score:

1. What went wrong? Why wasn't your score what you expected?

Can you point to a single factor or problem that you feel caused the low score? Were you sick on test day? Was there an emotional upheaval in your life that caused a distraction? Were you late for the test or not able to use the full time allotment? If you can point to any of these specific, individual problems, then a retake should definitely be considered.

2. Is there enough time to improve?

Many problems that may show up in your score report may take a lot of time for improvement. A deficiency in a particular math skill may require weeks or months of tutoring and studying to improve. If you have enough time to improve an identified weakness, then a retake should definitely be considered.

3. How will additional scores be used? Will a score average, highest score, or most recent score be used?

Different test scores may be handled completely differently. If you've taken the test multiple times, sometimes your highest score is used, sometimes your average score is computed and used, and sometimes your most recent score is used. Make sure you understand what method will be used to evaluate your scores, and use that to help you determine whether a retake should be considered.

4. Are my practice test scores significantly higher than my actual test score?

If you have taken a lot of practice tests and are consistently scoring at a much higher level than your actual test score, then you should consider a retake. However, if you've taken five practice tests and only one of your scores was higher than your actual test score, or if your practice test scores were only slightly higher than your actual test score, then it is unlikely that you will significantly increase your score.

5. Do I need perfect scores or will I be able to live with this score? Will this score still allow me to follow my dreams?

What kind of score is acceptable to you? Is your current score "good enough?" Do you have to have a certain score in order to pursue the future of your dreams? If you won't be happy with your current score, and there's no way that you could live with it, then you should consider a retake. However, don't get your hopes up. If you are looking for significant improvement, that may or may not be possible. But if you won't be happy otherwise, it is at least worth the effort.

Remember that there are other considerations. To achieve your dream, it is likely that your grades may also be taken into account. A great test score is usually not the only thing necessary to succeed. Make sure that you aren't overemphasizing the importance of a high test score.

Furthermore, a retake does not always result in a higher score. Some test takers will score lower on a retake, rather than higher. One study shows that one-fourth of test takers will achieve a significant improvement in test score, while one-sixth of test takers will actually show a decrease. While this shows that most test takers will improve, the majority will only improve their scores a little and a retake may not be worth the test taker's effort.

Finally, if a test is taken only once and is considered in the added context of good grades on the part of a test taker, the person reviewing the grades and scores may be tempted to assume that the test taker just had a bad day while taking the test, and may discount the low test score in favor of the high grades. But if the test is retaken and the scores are approximately the same, then the validity of the low scores are only confirmed. Therefore, a retake could actually hurt a test taker by definitely bracketing a test taker's score ability to a limited range.

## ***Special Report: What is Test Anxiety and How to Overcome It?***

The very nature of tests caters to some level of anxiety, nervousness or tension, just as we feel for any important event that occurs in our lives. A little bit of anxiety or nervousness can be a good thing. It helps us with motivation, and makes achievement just that much sweeter. However, too much anxiety can be a problem; especially if it hinders our ability to function and perform.

“Test anxiety,” is the term that refers to the emotional reactions that some test-takers experience when faced with a test or exam. Having a fear of testing and exams is based upon a rational fear, since the test-taker’s performance can shape the course of an academic career. Nevertheless, experiencing excessive fear of examinations will only interfere with the test-takers ability to perform, and his/her chances to be successful.

There are a large variety of causes that can contribute to the development and sensation of test anxiety. These include, but are not limited to lack of performance and worrying about issues surrounding the test.

### **Lack of Preparation**

Lack of preparation can be identified by the following behaviors or situations:

Not scheduling enough time to study, and therefore cramming the night before the test or exam

Managing time poorly, to create the sensation that there is not enough time to do everything

Failing to organize the text information in advance, so that the study material consists of the entire text and not simply the pertinent information

Poor overall studying habits

Worrying, on the other hand, can be related to both the test taker, or many other factors around him/her that will be affected by the results of the test.

These include worrying about:

Previous performances on similar exams, or exams in general

How friends and other students are achieving

The negative consequences that will result from a poor grade or failure

There are three primary elements to test anxiety. Physical components, which involve the same typical bodily reactions as those to acute anxiety (to be discussed below). Emotional factors have to do with fear or panic. Mental or cognitive issues concerning attention spans and memory abilities.

## **Physical Signals**

There are many different symptoms of test anxiety, and these are not limited to mental and emotional strain. Frequently there are a range of physical signals that will let a test taker know that he/she is suffering from test anxiety.

These bodily changes can include the following:

Perspiring

Sweaty palms

Wet, trembling hands

Nausea

Dry mouth

A knot in the stomach

Headache

Faintness

Muscle tension

Aching shoulders, back and neck

Rapid heart beat

Feeling too hot/cold

To recognize the sensation of test anxiety, a test-taker should monitor him/herself for the following sensations:

The physical distress symptoms as listed above

Emotional sensitivity, expressing emotional feelings such as the need to cry or laugh too much, or a sensation of anger or helplessness

A decreased ability to think, causing the test-taker to blank out or have racing thoughts that are hard to organize or control.

Though most students will feel some level of anxiety when faced with a test or exam, the majority can cope with that anxiety and maintain it at a manageable level. However, those who cannot are faced with a very real and very serious condition, which can and should be controlled for the immeasurable benefit of this sufferer.

Naturally, these sensations lead to negative results for the testing experience. The most common effects of test anxiety have to do with nervousness and mental blocking.

## **Nervousness**

Nervousness can appear in several different levels:

The test-taker's difficulty, or even inability to read and understand the questions on the test

The difficulty or inability to organize thoughts to a coherent form

The difficulty or inability to recall key words and concepts relating to the testing questions (especially essays)

The receipt of poor grades on a test, though the test material was well known by the test taker

Conversely, a person may also experience mental blocking, which involves:

Blanking out on test questions

Only remembering the correct answers to the questions when the test has already finished.

Fortunately for test anxiety sufferers, beating these feelings, to a large degree, has to do with proper preparation. When a test taker has a feeling of preparedness, then anxiety will be dramatically lessened.

The first step to resolving anxiety issues is to distinguish which of the two types of anxiety are being suffered. If the anxiety is a direct result of a lack of preparation, this should be considered a normal reaction, and the anxiety level (as opposed to the test results) shouldn't be anything to worry about. However, if, when adequately prepared, the test-taker still panics, blanks out, or seems to overreact, this is not a fully rational reaction. While this can be considered normal too, there are many ways to combat and overcome these effects.

Remember that anxiety cannot be entirely eliminated, however, there are ways to minimize it, to make the anxiety easier to manage. Preparation is one of the best ways to minimize test anxiety. Therefore the following techniques are wise in order to best fight off any anxiety that may want to build.

To begin with, try to avoid cramming before a test, whenever it is possible. By trying to memorize an entire term's worth of information in one day, you'll be shocking your system, and not giving yourself a very good chance to absorb the information. This is an easy path to anxiety, so for those who suffer from test anxiety, cramming should not even be considered an option.

Instead of cramming, work throughout the semester to combine all of the material which is presented throughout the semester, and work on it gradually as the course goes by, making sure to master the main concepts first, leaving minor details for a week or so before the test.

To study for the upcoming exam, be sure to pose questions that may be on the examination, to gauge the ability to answer them by integrating the ideas from your texts, notes and lectures, as well as any supplementary readings.

If it is truly impossible to cover all of the information that was covered in that particular term, concentrate on the most important portions, that can be covered very well. Learn these concepts as best as possible, so that when the test comes, a goal can be made to use these concepts as presentations of your knowledge.

In addition to study habits, changes in attitude are critical to beating a struggle with test anxiety. In fact, an improvement of the perspective over the entire test-taking experience can actually help a test taker to enjoy studying and therefore improve the overall experience. Be certain not to overemphasize the significance of the grade - know that the result of the test is neither a reflection of self worth, nor is it a measure of intelligence; one grade will not predict a person's future success.

To improve an overall testing outlook, the following steps should be tried:

Keeping in mind that the most reasonable expectation for taking a test is to expect to try to demonstrate as much of what you know as you possibly can. Reminding ourselves that a test is only one test; this is not the only one, and there will be others.

The thought of thinking of oneself in an irrational, all-or-nothing term should be avoided at all costs.

A reward should be designated for after the test, so there's something to look forward to. Whether it be going to a movie, going out to eat, or simply visiting friends, schedule it in advance, and do it no matter what result is expected on the exam.

Test-takers should also keep in mind that the basics are some of the most important things, even beyond anti-anxiety techniques and studying. Never neglect the basic social, emotional and biological needs, in order to try to absorb information. In order to best achieve, these three factors must be held as just as important as the studying itself.

## **Study Steps**

Remember the following important steps for studying:

Maintain healthy nutrition and exercise habits. Continue both your recreational activities and social pass times. These both contribute to your physical and emotional well being.

Be certain to get a good amount of sleep, especially the night before the test, because when you're overtired you are not able to perform to the best of your best ability.

Keep the studying pace to a moderate level by taking breaks when they are needed, and varying the work whenever possible, to keep the mind fresh instead of getting bored.

When enough studying has been done that all the material that can be learned has been learned, and the test taker is prepared for the test, stop studying and do something relaxing such as listening to music, watching a movie, or taking a warm bubble bath.

There are also many other techniques to minimize the uneasiness or apprehension that is experienced along with test anxiety before, during, or even after the examination. In fact, there are a great deal of things that can be done to stop anxiety from interfering with lifestyle and performance. Again, remember that anxiety will not be eliminated entirely, and it shouldn't be. Otherwise that "up" feeling for exams would not exist, and most of us depend on that sensation to perform better than usual. However, this anxiety has to be at a level that is manageable.

Of course, as we have just discussed, being prepared for the exam is half the battle right away. Attending all classes, finding out what knowledge will be expected on the exam, and knowing the exam schedules are easy steps to lowering anxiety. Keeping up with work will remove the need to cram, and efficient study habits will eliminate wasted time. Studying should be done in an ideal location for concentration, so that it is simple to become interested in the material and give it complete attention. A method such as SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) is a wonderful key to follow to make sure that the study habits are as effective as possible, especially in the case of learning from a textbook. Flashcards are great techniques for memorization. Learning to take good notes will mean that notes will be full of useful information, so that less sifting will need to be done to seek out what is pertinent for studying. Reviewing notes after class and then again on occasion will keep the information fresh in the mind. From notes that have been taken summary sheets and outlines can be made for simpler reviewing.

A study group can also be a very motivational and helpful place to study, as there will be a sharing of ideas, all of the minds can work together, to make sure that everyone understands, and the studying will be made more interesting because it will be a social occasion.

Basically, though, as long as the test-taker remains organized and self confident, with efficient study habits, less time will need to be spent studying, and higher grades will be achieved.

To become self confident, there are many useful steps. The first of these is “self talk.” It has been shown through extensive research, that self-talk for students who suffer from test anxiety, should be well monitored, in order to make sure that it contributes to self confidence as opposed to sinking the student. Frequently the self talk of test-anxious students is negative or self-defeating, thinking that everyone else is smarter and faster, that they always mess up, and that if they don’t do well, they’ll fail the entire course. It is important to decreasing anxiety that awareness is made of self talk. Try writing any negative self thoughts and then disputing them with a positive statement instead. Begin self-encouragement as though it was a friend speaking. Repeat positive statements to help reprogram the mind to believing in successes instead of failures.

## **Helpful Techniques**

Other extremely helpful techniques include:

Self-visualization of doing well and reaching goals

While aiming for an “A” level of understanding, don’t try to “overprotect” by setting your expectations lower. This will only convince the mind to stop studying in order to meet the lower expectations.

Don't make comparisons with the results or habits of other students. These are individual factors, and different things work for different people, causing different results.

Strive to become an expert in learning what works well, and what can be done in order to improve. Consider collecting this data in a journal.

Create rewards for after studying instead of doing things before studying that will only turn into avoidance behaviors.

Make a practice of relaxing - by using methods such as progressive relaxation, self-hypnosis, guided imagery, etc - in order to make relaxation an automatic sensation.

Work on creating a state of relaxed concentration so that concentrating will take on the focus of the mind, so that none will be wasted on worrying.

Take good care of the physical self by eating well and getting enough sleep.

Plan in time for exercise and stick to this plan.

Beyond these techniques, there are other methods to be used before, during and after the test that will help the test-taker perform well in addition to overcoming anxiety.

Before the exam comes the academic preparation. This involves establishing a study schedule and beginning at least one week before the actual date of the test. By doing this, the anxiety of not having enough time to study for the test will be automatically eliminated. Moreover, this will make the studying a much more effective experience, ensuring that the learning will be an easier process. This relieves much undue pressure on the test-taker.

Summary sheets, note cards, and flash cards with the main concepts and examples of these main concepts should be prepared in advance of the actual studying time. A topic should never be eliminated from this process. By omitting a topic because it isn't expected to be on the test is only setting up the test-taker for anxiety should it actually appear on the exam. Utilize the

course syllabus for laying out the topics that should be studied. Carefully go over the notes that were made in class, paying special attention to any of the issues that the professor took special care to emphasize while lecturing in class. In the textbooks, use the chapter review, or if possible, the chapter tests, to begin your review.

It may even be possible to ask the instructor what information will be covered on the exam, or what the format of the exam will be (for example, multiple choice, essay, free form, true-false). Additionally, see if it is possible to find out how many questions will be on the test. If a review sheet or sample test has been offered by the professor, make good use of it, above anything else, for the preparation for the test. Another great resource for getting to know the examination is reviewing tests from previous semesters. Use these tests to review, and aim to achieve a 100% score on each of the possible topics. With a few exceptions, the goal that you set for yourself is the highest one that you will reach.

Take all of the questions that were assigned as homework, and rework them to any other possible course material. The more problems reworked, the more skill and confidence will form as a result. When forming the solution to a problem, write out each of the steps. Don't simply do head work. By doing as many steps on paper as possible, much clarification and therefore confidence will be formed. Do this with as many homework problems as possible, before checking the answers. By checking the answer after each problem, a reinforcement will exist, that will not be on the exam. Study situations should be as exam-like as possible, to prime the test-taker's system for the experience. By waiting to check the answers at the end, a psychological advantage will be formed, to decrease the stress factor.

Another fantastic reason for not cramming is the avoidance of confusion in concepts, especially when it comes to mathematics. 8-10 hours of study will

become one hundred percent more effective if it is spread out over a week or at least several days, instead of doing it all in one sitting. Recognize that the human brain requires time in order to assimilate new material, so frequent breaks and a span of study time over several days will be much more beneficial.

Additionally, don't study right up until the point of the exam. Studying should stop a minimum of one hour before the exam begins. This allows the brain to rest and put things in their proper order. This will also provide the time to become as relaxed as possible when going into the examination room. The test-taker will also have time to eat well and eat sensibly. Know that the brain needs food as much as the rest of the body. With enough food and enough sleep, as well as a relaxed attitude, the body and the mind are primed for success.

Avoid any anxious classmates who are talking about the exam. These students only spread anxiety, and are not worth sharing the anxious sentimentalities.

Before the test also involves creating a positive attitude, so mental preparation should also be a point of concentration. There are many keys to creating a positive attitude. Should fears become rushing in, make a visualization of taking the exam, doing well, and seeing an A written on the paper. Write out a list of affirmations that will bring a feeling of confidence, such as "I am doing well in my English class," "I studied well and know my material," "I enjoy this class." Even if the affirmations aren't believed at first, it sends a positive message to the subconscious which will result in an alteration of the overall belief system, which is the system that creates reality.

If a sensation of panic begins, work with the fear and imagine the very worst! Work through the entire scenario of not passing the test, failing the entire

course, and dropping out of school, followed by not getting a job, and pushing a shopping cart through the dark alley where you'll live. This will place things into perspective! Then, practice deep breathing and create a visualization of the opposite situation - achieving an "A" on the exam, passing the entire course, receiving the degree at a graduation ceremony.

On the day of the test, there are many things to be done to ensure the best results, as well as the most calm outlook. The following stages are suggested in order to maximize test-taking potential:

Begin the examination day with a moderate breakfast, and avoid any coffee or beverages with caffeine if the test taker is prone to jitters. Even people who are used to managing caffeine can feel jittery or light-headed when it is taken on a test day.

Attempt to do something that is relaxing before the examination begins. As last minute cramming clouds the mastering of overall concepts, it is better to use this time to create a calming outlook.

Be certain to arrive at the test location well in advance, in order to provide time to select a location that is away from doors, windows and other distractions, as well as giving enough time to relax before the test begins.

Keep away from anxiety generating classmates who will upset the sensation of stability and relaxation that is being attempted before the exam.

Should the waiting period before the exam begins cause anxiety, create a self-distraction by reading a light magazine or something else that is relaxing and simple.

During the exam itself, read the entire exam from beginning to end, and find out how much time should be allotted to each individual problem. Once writing the exam, should more time be taken for a problem, it should be abandoned, in order to begin another problem. If there is time at the end, the unfinished problem can always be returned to and completed.

Read the instructions very carefully - twice - so that unpleasant surprises won't follow during or after the exam has ended.

When writing the exam, pretend that the situation is actually simply the completion of homework within a library, or at home. This will assist in forming a relaxed atmosphere, and will allow the brain extra focus for the complex thinking function.

Begin the exam with all of the questions with which the most confidence is felt. This will build the confidence level regarding the entire exam and will begin a quality momentum. This will also create encouragement for trying the problems where uncertainty resides.

Going with the "gut instinct" is always the way to go when solving a problem. Second guessing should be avoided at all costs. Have confidence in the ability to do well.

For essay questions, create an outline in advance that will keep the mind organized and make certain that all of the points are remembered. For multiple choice, read every answer, even if the correct one has been spotted - a better one may exist.

Continue at a pace that is reasonable and not rushed, in order to be able to work carefully. Provide enough time to go over the answers at the end, to check for small errors that can be corrected.

Should a feeling of panic begin, breathe deeply, and think of the feeling of the body releasing sand through its pores. Visualize a calm, peaceful place, and include all of the sights, sounds and sensations of this image. Continue the

deep breathing, and take a few minutes to continue this with closed eyes. When all is well again, return to the test.

If a “blinking” occurs for a certain question, skip it and move on to the next question. There will be time to return to the other question later. Get everything done that can be done, first, to guarantee all the grades that can be compiled, and to build all of the confidence possible. Then return to the weaker questions to build the marks from there.

Remember, one’s own reality can be created, so as long as the belief is there, success will follow. And remember: anxiety can happen later, right now, there’s an exam to be written!

After the examination is complete, whether there is a feeling for a good grade or a bad grade, don’t dwell on the exam, and be certain to follow through on the reward that was promised...and enjoy it! Don’t dwell on any mistakes that have been made, as there is nothing that can be done at this point anyway.

Additionally, don’t begin to study for the next test right away. Do something relaxing for a while, and let the mind relax and prepare itself to begin absorbing information again.

From the results of the exam - both the grade and the entire experience, be certain to learn from what has gone on. Perfect studying habits and work some more on confidence in order to make the next examination experience even better than the last one.

Learn to avoid places where openings occurred for laziness, procrastination and day dreaming.

Use the time between this exam and the next one to better learn to relax, even learning to relax on cue, so that any anxiety can be controlled during the next exam. Learn how to relax the body. Slouch in your chair if that helps. Tighten and then relax all of the different muscle groups, one group at a time, beginning with the feet and then working all the way up to the neck and face. This will ultimately relax the muscles more than they were to begin with. Learn how to breath deeply and comfortably, and focus on this breathing going in and out as a relaxing thought. With every exhale, repeat the word "relax."

As common as test anxiety is, it is very possible to overcome it. Make yourself one of the test-takers who overcome this frustrating hindrance.

## ***Special Report: Additional Bonus Material***

Due to our efforts to try to keep this book to a manageable length, we've created a link that will give you access to all of your additional bonus material.

Please visit <http://www.ielts-secrets.com/bonuses> to access the information.