



Live Lesson Notes

Intelligence

@Topic_based_vocabulary

What you will learn in this worksheet:

Vocabulary about Intelligence
Different kinds of Intelligence
Intelligence quiz
Idioms to talk about Intelligence

IELTS Speaking Vocabulary: Intelligent People

Intelligence is a popular topic for Part 2 and Part 3 of IELTS Speaking.

First of all, let's look at some vocabulary you can use to talk about this topic, including useful synonyms.

All of the following are synonyms of '**intelligent**', but with some slightly different usage and connotations.

Synonyms

Intelligent (adj.) - *usually used to talk about people*

Collocations: Highly, incredibly, remarkably

Einstein was a highly intelligent man

Ingenious (adj.) - *usually used to talk about things, ideas, ways...*

That's an ingenious idea

He has found an ingenious way of learning English

(Note: We also have the word 'genius' pronounced the same way and meaning a very intelligent person, but it is a noun.)

Clever (adj.) - *to talk about people and things*

My daughter is so clever, she passed all her exams!

*I like how you solved this problem, **that was very clever of you***

*He is so annoying, he is **a real clever clogs!***

Next, we have more synonyms and all of these can mean 'intelligent' describing people, but these words also have a second unrelated meaning.

Smart (adj.)

Can also mean 'well-dressed'

Sharp (adj.)

Can also mean 'pointed'

Bright (adj.)

Can also mean 'shiny'

Quick (adj.)

Can also mean 'fast'

Quick on the uptake = quick to answer and solve problems

Tom is a real smart student, he is so quick on the uptake.

Now, the following three words are used to describe a slightly different kind of intelligence. This is not so much about being a good student, but about being good at solving problems in real life.

Resourceful (adj.)

I would never have thought of doing that, that's a great idea, you are so resourceful.

Street-wise (adj.)

Tom Selby, from the series 'Peak Blinders', is a street wise leader and he is really resourceful when it comes to solving the many problems life throws at him.

Astute (adj.) = able to notice and understand things

Collocations: Financially, politically, very

Elon Musk is an astute businessman

Finally, we have two words that mean intelligent, but they are slightly negative in that they suggest someone solves problems in a smart way but maybe in a dishonest way or a way that is harmful to others.

Crafty (adj.)

Cunning (adj.)

That is a crafty way of avoiding tax payments, but I am not sure it is legal.

Be careful with Jack, he is cunning and can't be trusted.

IELTS Speaking Ideas: Different kinds of Intelligence

When talk about intelligence, we tend to refer to **academic intelligence**. We talk about people who are good at studying, passing exams and so on.

However, there are different kinds of intelligence.

For example, many business people drop out of school, but they are very successful in business because they are intelligent in different ways.

Maybe they are good with people, or they know how to persuade and influence others.

Below we have some different kinds of intelligence that you can talk about for this topic in IELTS Speaking.

Make a note of the collocations and meanings

Innate intelligence

Intelligence you are born with (inherit), from your parents' genetics.

Artificial intelligence

Read more about this in [a recent live lesson on Technology](#)

Academic intelligence

Good at studying

Emotional intelligence

Good at recognising and handling your emotions

Multiple intelligences

These were made popular by Howard Gardner and including the following kinds of intelligence,

- Visual-spatial
- Linguistic-verbal
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Logical-mathematical
- Musical
- Bodily-kinaesthetic
- Naturalistic

[Read more about Multiple Intelligences here.](#)

Find out what kind of intelligence you have by [trying this test](#)

IELTS Speaking Question about Intelligence

A common but complicated question you may hear in IELTS Speaking on this topic of intelligent people is the following:

Is intelligence innate or is it something we can develop?

Here below, you have some useful phrases you could use to start your answer.

- It depends what kind of intelligence you are talking about...
- This is the old **nature versus nurture debate**...I think...
- I guess intelligence is influenced by both **genetic** and **environmental factors**...
- I think intelligence is something we **inherit from** our parents
- Studies with **identical twins** show intelligence is largely genetic
- **I read somewhere that** intelligence can be learned
- **Academic intelligence** is something we can develop
- **Academic intelligence** is something that can be developed

IELTS Speaking: Idioms to talk about intelligence

Here are a selection of useful idioms you could use when discussing this topic.

Don't overuse idioms in the IELTS Speaking test.

Just use a few, that should be fine.

The following two idioms mean to be intelligent or smart

To be **as sharp as a knife**

A president needs to be as sharp as a knife

To be **as bright as a button**

My friend does so well at school, he is as bright as a button

To **be on the ball** = to be astute, quick to react.

*Katie gave a good answer to that difficult question, she was really on
the
ball*

To **be the brains behind** something = to be the one responsible for it

You should thank Katie, she is the brains behind this great idea

To **suffer fools lightly** = to be patient with stupid people

*My mother-in-law **doesn't suffer fools lightly***

To **be born yesterday** = to be gullible and naive

*My boss knew this plan wouldn't work, he **wasn't born yesterday***

To **miss a trick** = to know everything that is happening

*My boss knows what everyone should be working on. He **doesn't miss a trick.***

To **be out of one's depth** = to not know what to do or how to do something

This class is too difficult, I'm out of my depth

Finally, the following idioms all mean **I don't understand something.**

- I can't get my head around it
- It's all Greek to me
- I can't make head or tail of it
- I can't make heads or tails of it