

**Practical IELTS  
Strategies 2**

**IELTS**

**Speaking**

**Andrew Guilfoyle**

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# IELTS Speaking

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ISBN 978-957-445-505-8

Published by Bookman Books, Ltd. 2013  
3F, 60 Roosevelt Rd. Sec. 4, Taipei 100, Taiwan

English Editor: Lynn Sauvé  
Administrative Editor: Emma Liu

Printed in Taiwan

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## 關於本書

本書為《雅思實用策略》（*Practical IELTS Strategies*）系列中的第二冊，在進入主題前，我們先來了解下面兩個關鍵字是什麼意思：

「實用」：與實際情況有關；正確或合理；切實可行

「策略」：用來達成特定目的的計畫；技巧地執行計畫的過程

本書乃針對「雅思」測驗的口說部分；本書不僅涵蓋文法、試題練習，以及單字，更如書名所強調，提供符合實際考試狀況的實用策略，讓考生在能力範圍內得到最高的分數。

《雅思實用策略》（*Practical IELTS Strategies*）系列還包含：

第一冊：閱讀

第三冊：寫作測驗 Task One（學術組）

第四冊：寫作測驗 Task Two（學術組）

第五冊：雅思 6 回全真測驗

讀這本書的人得先對我有信心，還必須了解兩個事實；第一是我的資歷；只有具豐富資歷的作者寫的雅思測驗準備用書才值得信任，請讀者詳讀我的資歷。第二是我為何要寫這個系列的書？首先，時常有學生問我：「怎樣才能通過雅思測驗呢？」這個問題很矛盾，因為考生並不會得到通過或是不及格的結果，而是獲得級分。其實我知道他們想問什麼——如何考到所需的級分，通常是平均 6.5 或 7.0 級分。

那我怎麼回答他們呢？我通常會說，要在雅思中拿高分沒有神奇秘訣。雅思是一項英語能力檢定，所以能力越好，分數自然越高。若想要加強實力，當然要好好努力練習聽說讀寫，不過，就算英文再好，如果準備不足、練習不夠，考試時當然也有可能會搞錯方向，最後拿到的分數比應得的分數還低。因此，考前的準備和練習相當重要，我也一直向我的學生強調這一點，但是我知道他們要一個更明確的答案。

市面上充斥許多雅思準備教材，我的學生常常會買來閱讀、使用，可是這些教材提供的建議和方法一定有效嗎？當然不是。學生們必須了解其實沒有所謂的神奇秘訣，想要在雅思中拿高分，考前的練習和準備相當重要。當然，學生想要也需要一些實用策略，只是他們在準備時往往都太過依賴這些不良教材。

正因如此，我才寫了這系列的書。簡單來說，這幾本書就是教導考生如何「通過」雅思的最佳工具書，重點就是牢記書中秘訣。本書有二十個學習秘訣和四十多回練習，每個秘訣都可靠且經過驗證，讓考生循序漸進、確實地學習，並且附上雅思中心公佈的級分說明。書末附有解答，所有學習重點也都寫成摘要，架構清晰，學習目標明確，考生定能藉由閱讀此書通過雅思測驗。



## 關於英文學習用書的中文翻譯

雅思是一項英文能力檢定，參考書籍當然不能用中文來寫，這樣無法學習英文或加強英文實力。任何英語考試用書如果附有中文翻譯，反倒害了考生。

本書針對中級程度的學生，全書附有文法和單字練習，讀者應能輕易抓住精髓。閱讀以英文寫成的書是準備雅思的必經之途，唯有如此，讀者才能掌握學習要領，太依賴中文翻譯只會適得其反。

本書只有前言有中文翻譯，目的是要清楚傳達剛才所說的要點，接下來，各位就只能使用英文，努力增進英文能力了。

讓我們開始這段全英文的學習之路吧，就從第 iv 頁的 vocabulary 開始。

## About this Book

So, you have Book Two of the *Practical IELTS Strategies* series. Let us first be sure we know the meaning of those two key words.

Practical	=	connected with <i>real situations</i> ; right or sensible; likely to be successful
Strategy	=	a plan that is intended to achieve a <i>particular purpose</i> ; the process of putting a <i>plan</i> into effect in a skilful way

This book—Book Two—is for the IELTS Speaking Test. This is not a grammar book; not a test practice book; not a vocabulary book, although all of those elements are here. Overall, this book is practical and strategic, exactly as those definitions tell us. The *real situation* is the IELTS test, and the *particular purpose* or *plan* is to give you the highest score that you can achieve.

My other ‘Practical IELTS Strategies’ books are:

- Book 1: Reading
- Book 3: Writing Task One [Academic Module]
- Book 4: Writing Task Two [Academic Module]
- Book 5: IELTS Test Practice Book

Now, it is very important at this stage for you to trust me, and for this to happen you need to know two facts. The first concerns my *credentials*. In order for you to trust someone who writes an IELTS preparation book, they must be fully qualified to do so. Please look at the back cover of this book, and read my credentials carefully. The second fact concerns *why* I wrote these books. Let me begin this by saying that students of English often come to me and ask, ‘How do I pass the IELTS test?’ This is the wrong question—you do not *pass* or *fail* the test; you just receive band scores. However, I know what the students mean. They mean how do they achieve the band score they need—usually 6.5 or 7.0 overall.

So what do I say to these students? I usually say that there are *no magic answers* to obtaining higher band scores in the IELTS test. It is a test of English language ability, so, of course, you obtain higher scores by having higher ability. The best way to raise your ability is simply to practise your listening, reading, writing, and speaking. However, no matter how you’re your English may be, it is certainly possible for you to be unprepared, unpractised, and to try to do parts of the IELTS test in the wrong way, and thus to receive a result lower (or far lower) than what your English ability deserves. This is why it is also important to prepare and practise. I say this, too, to my students. However I know that they want a more definite answer.

This is why there is so much ‘IELTS Preparation’ material available, and my students often have, read, and use some of it, but does this material always provide the best advice and approaches? The answer is no. Students should know that there are no magic answers, and that practice and preparation are important to achieving a high IELTS band score, but they clearly want and need some practical and strategic approaches showing how, and they are too often relying on unsatisfactory material to find this.

So that is why I wrote these IELTS books. In short, these books are the answer to that question about how to ‘pass’ the IELTS test. The answer is to follow the tips in these books. In this one, there are twenty tips and over forty exercises. Each tip builds on the previous. Each tip is solid, proven, and supported. There are answers to all exercises. All the knowledge is summarised and demonstrated at the end to make a clear and achievable framework. This book is how you ‘pass’ the test. So, let us then begin on this road.

## Some Words

To help in understanding this book, let us first look at some of the more uncommon words that will be used

A. Do you know the meaning of the following? If you do not, look them up in a dictionary.

to anticipate

to drift

an **outcome**

to be **appropriate**

an evaluation

a **pattern**

to be **assertive**

to be **familiar**

proof

a **basis**

some **flattery**

a quiz

a block

**fluency**

to **ramble**

to bounce

to be **formal**

a range

to bridge

to **generalise**

a **reaction**

a **category**

a groove

to **reflect**

to be **chronological**

indication

to be **relevant**

to **clarify**

to be **mature**

to **reply**

to **compliment**

to muse

to **respond**

a cue

to be **native**

a short-circuit

to **divide**

to **narrate**

a **simplification**

B. Fill the spaces with one of the words from the previous table. Use the right tense and grammar. Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

1. At first I didn't understand, but the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ it nicely.
2. The doctor gave me no \_\_\_\_\_ that there was a problem.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ of your argument is that all people want money.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ her request for help by offering her a job.
5. He showed me \_\_\_\_\_ of his age, so I let him enter the bar.
6. This animal has a very large \_\_\_\_\_; over half of Africa.
7. I tried to \_\_\_\_\_ to her question but she wouldn't listen.
8. His speech was boring. He just \_\_\_\_\_ the whole time.
9. He spilt coffee on the computer and there was a \_\_\_\_\_ .
10. The light hits the mirror then \_\_\_\_\_ back into your eyes.
11. Could you explain more? I'm not \_\_\_\_\_ with the subject at all.
12. He said that he would \_\_\_\_\_ me when the time was up.
13. The rope has worn a \_\_\_\_\_ in this piece of wood.
14. The ball \_\_\_\_\_ off the wall, and through the window.
15. You can \_\_\_\_\_ me, but don't go too far; I don't like \_\_\_\_\_ .
16. When I told him the news, his \_\_\_\_\_ was bad.
17. I know what you're saying, but it's not \_\_\_\_\_ to the issue.
18. I want you to sort these applications into three \_\_\_\_\_.
19. I'm afraid that your behaviour is simply not \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Tell me about everything that happened, but put it in \_\_\_\_\_ order.

C. Complete the following table.

Noun	Verb	Noun	Verb
	<b>reflect</b>	cue	
indication			<b>flatter</b>
	bridge	reaction	
proof			<b>respond</b>
	<b>ramble</b>	evaluation	
simplification			<b>narrate</b>
clarification			<b>anticipate</b>
	bounce	<b>formality</b>	
maturity			<b>generalise</b>
	<b>divide</b>	drift	

## About the IELTS Speaking Test

Before looking at any tips, let us first make sure we know everything we can about the IELTS Speaking test itself. This will also make the tips in this book clearer.

We can perhaps best look at the test by using the following quiz, and then discussing the answers. So, try the following. Work with a friend, if you can.

### IELTS Quiz: True or False

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. The Speaking Test is recorded.                                 | T / F |
| 2. You need to bring your passport.                               | T / F |
| 3. The Speaking Test is about 15 minutes.                         | T / F |
| 4. There are four parts to the test.                              | T / F |
| 5. Each part is a presentation.                                   | T / F |
| 6. Grammar/accuracy is most important.                            | T / F |
| 7. You can say whatever you want.                                 | T / F |
| 8. Your clothing can affect your score.                           | T / F |
| 9. Saying nice things about the examiner can increase your score. | T / F |
| 10. Memorising pieces of speech is a good idea.                   | T / F |

We can now discuss the answers.

**Question 1** is true. The speaking is recorded for two reasons: one, so that the examiner doing the test can listen again after you have gone; and two, so that you can have your speaking re-judged.

**Question 2** is true. You need to bring your passport so that your identity can be checked at the beginning of the test. As for **Question 3**, it is also true. The test is indeed about 15 minutes, but often a little shorter.

**Question 4** and **5** are false. There are *three* parts to the test, and each part is different, as follows:

#### Speaking Test

<b>Part One</b> Interview	which has short questions and answers on familiar topics, and lasts for about 4 to 5 minutes.
<b>Part Two</b> Long Turn	where, after one minute to think and take notes, you must talk on a subject for up to 2 minutes.

<p><b>Part Three</b> Discussion</p>	<p>which has longer, and deeper, questions and answers on unfamiliar topics, and lasts for about four to five minutes.</p>
---	--

**Question 6** is false. Grammar and accuracy are certainly important, but there is much more to good speaking. Your speaking is actually judged on four categories, as follows.

**1. Fluency & Coherence.**

(Did you speak at length, without difficulty, and clearly?)

**2. Lexical Resource.**

(Did you use mature and appropriate words?)

**3. Grammatical Range & Accuracy.**

(Did you use a good range of grammar, and use it accurately?)

**4. Pronunciation.**

(Was your pronunciation clear, and used to good effect  
[with stress and intonation also used to show meaning]?)

**Question 7** is not as simple as you think. As the ‘About Speaking’ Section, and Tip 17, 18, and 19 will explain, there is some ‘room to move’ when you speak, and in the Speaking Test, the examiner does not have a ‘Task Achievement’ or ‘Task Response’ category to consider. So, for example, in Part Two of the speaking test, students often ask:

1. Do you have to talk for the whole two minutes?
2. Do you have to talk about the exact topic?
3. Can you change the topic half way through?
4. Do you have to answer all the questions on the page?

The answer is that the only information or guidelines on this are the public version of the IELTS band descriptors. These state that you are judged *only* on the four categories given in the answer to Question 6. This leads to the *cautious* answers, ‘No, No, Yes, No’ respectively. You are not *directly* judged on how complete, accurate, clever, or relevant your speaking answers are, although a complete, accurate, clever, and relevant answer is, of course, very good.

This means, within some limits, you can talk about any subject, in whatever way, that you want, at any part of the test. For example, if you honestly misunderstand the Part Two Topic Page, and talk about something completely ‘off-topic’ (which can happen to anyone, even native speakers), then you could still score a perfect IELTS Band Score Nine! You just need to do this fluently, clearly, with excellent word use and perfect pronunciation.

On the other hand, as Tip 4, Part Two will explain, when asked to talk about *specific* items, if you ‘drift’ into easier *general* descriptions, it will probably show the examiner that you do not have the English skills to answer the question. However, if you ‘signpost’ this shift with honest reasons, then the answer becomes good.

In the IELTS Speaking Test, the fact that there are no task fulfilment rules, and no ‘off-topic’ penalties, simply shows the un-planned and free nature of informal speaking, which is simply *impossible* to ‘regulate’. Even good speakers may well ‘drift’ off the topic, ‘jump’ on other topics that seem more interesting, avoid questions, and admit when they do not know something. You are judged more on the:

1. way you speak,
2. *appropriacy* of your answer.

The answer to **Question 7** is thus *true*, as long as your speaking is *appropriate* to the situation. Tips 4 and 5, and 17 and 18 will look at this more.

As for **Question 8**, the IELTS examiner is a person, so can be affected, perhaps without even knowing it, but whatever examiners might feel, they should not be influenced by personal feelings. They simply judge the speaking as they hear it.

Dress presentably, but normally. Dress in a way that is most comfortable for you – that is, dress in the way that you usually dress, and stop thinking that clothes matter. Feeling comfortable, feeling natural, feeling like yourself, will relax you most, and that *will* help your speaking.

**Question 9** is, clearly, false. Remember, particularly in the western world, you are the equal of the examiner. As for **Question 10**, it is also false. Memorised passages of speech show clearly to anyone listening. Examiners will usually not consider or judge this, and they will change the subject to make sure the speaking is ‘yours’. [See Tip 5, Exercise 17, Case 4].



## About IELTS Speaking

Speaking is known as a ‘productive’ skill. It is different from listening and reading, where we receive the message. In speaking, we are *producing* it. The first point to realise is that this gives us control over the message.

The second point is that this speaking is far more informal compared to IELTS writing. This is because it is spoken directly to a listener, so the situation does not need to be explained, and also because speaking is just words disappearing in the air. This informality means, for example, that it is not so bad if you go off the topic, in fact, such ‘rambling’ can be a natural feature of informal speech.

A further advantage in IELTS speaking is that there is a procedure involved, and knowing a procedure means that we can make tips about how to handle this best. In addition, the speaking score is decided by the IELTS examiner. This person uses a set of descriptions for each score. These are not available to the public. There is, however, a public version of these ‘descriptors’ available at [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org).

By referring to these, we can know that the speaking score is decided using four categories, as we also saw in the IELTS Quiz. These public version IELTS descriptors also allow us to work out ourselves that those categories can be broken up into two *sub*-categories, as follows.

Category	Sub-category
Fluency & Coherence	1. Speaks with flow and without effort
	2. Uses discourse markers and connectives
Lexical Resource	1. Uses a range of words
	2. Paraphrases when required
Grammatical Range & Accuracy	1. Uses a range of grammar
	2. Uses that grammar accurately
Pronunciation	1. Uses a range of pronunciation features
	2. Can be understood

Take a careful look at these, as I will refer to them many times throughout this book. The IELTS scores for these categories go higher as you show *less* self-correction, less repetition, and less overuse of words, *fewer* pauses, hesitations or breakdowns, and, at higher levels, a *more* flexible, clearer, appropriate, error-free, and natural speaking.

One important point to understand is that you need to achieve *both* sub-categories to achieve the matching IELTS band score. For example, to score an IELTS Six for 'Fluency & Coherence', your speaking must 1. have flow and little effort, *and* 2. use discourse markers and connectives, *both* according to the IELTS Six description.

- So, in IELTS Speaking we have:
1. control of the message,
  2. an informal situation,
  3. a procedure that we know,
  4. descriptors to look at.

These four factors mean that we can form many tips. However, this does not mean speaking is easy, in fact, if you have just studied grammar all the time, it may be your weakest skill. It may be a good idea to find a friend, or someone else who wants to do the IELTS tests, and you can work through the tips and exercises in this book together.

So, let us now begin traveling on the journey through the tips to help you in the IELTS Speaking Test.

## The IELTS Band Descriptors

### **Band Nine – Expert User**

Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate, and fluent, with complete understanding.

### **Band Eight – Very Good User**

Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

### **Band Seven – Good User**

Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies, and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well, and understands detailed reasoning.

### **Band Six – Competent User**

Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

### **Band Five – Modest User**

Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

### **Band Four – Limited User**

Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.

### **Band Three – Extremely Limited User**

Conveys and understanding only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.

### **Band Two – Intermittent User**

No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations, and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

### **Band One – Non User**

Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.

A red octagonal label with white text, centered on a white background. The label has a white border and a white diagonal stripe in each corner.

GENERAL TIPS: 1-7

# Tip 1

## The Basis of Good Speaking

### Preliminary

What is one of the most important pieces of advice in the IELTS Speaking test? The answer is...*to speak!* The test is not a good time to be shy or in a quiet mood. You have to *prove* yourself to be a good speaker. Examiners can only judge the speaking that is recorded. Thus, it is important to give views and opinions in a clear and persuasive way. Well, that is not easy – but there are many people pretending it is, and giving much bad advice – advice that is *not* the basis of good speaking. So, what *is* this basis?

Let us first consider perfect speaking? How do you receive an IELTS Band Score Nine? Let us consider ‘native’ or ‘natural’ speakers of English. It may surprise you to know that educated native speakers of English sometimes do the IELTS test. Australian doctors, for example, who want to work in England, have to do the IELTS test. They do *not* study IELTS books, but they usually score an IELTS Nine for speaking. How? Well, they have almost perfect grammar and very good words; they speak easily, fluently, willingly, and they do *not* pretend or lie. In doing this, they use all the features of natural speech which prove their high speaking ability to the IELTS examiner. Let us look at some of these features.

### Features of Natural Speech

#### Exercise 1

Can you match the features in the first column with their example in the second? You might need a dictionary for this. Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

Features of Natural Speech	Example
1. Discourse markers	A. ‘It’s a toss-up between the two.’
2. Informal grammar	B. ‘There’s four people there.’
3. Hedges	C. ‘If I <i>did</i> go to England, I’d <i>definitely</i> miss my country?’
4. Ellipsis	D. ‘Every Tom, Dick, and IELTS candidate.’


- 5. Onomatopoeia E. ‘...be that as it may...’
- 6. Abbreviations F. ‘Got a cold. Long time. Feeling bad.’
- 7. Colloquial expressions G. ‘He was, kind of, y’know, tired.’
- 8. Jokes and puns H. ‘I was gonna be late ‘cos I missed the bus.’
- 9. Fixed expression I. ‘Anyway, everyone had a good time.’
- 10. Effective stress and tone J. ‘The thing went ‘whoosh’ right passed me.’

## The ‘Beat’ of English

Another feature of natural speech is speaking with a beat. How would an English native speaker say, ‘What are you doing?’ The speaker would *not* say, ‘What – Are – You – Doing?’ but quite possibly say,

‘Whadayado’n?’  
/ wɒdəjəduən /

English is a ‘stress-timed’ language, and this means that there is a regular ‘beat’ to the speaking. For example:


  
‘WHERE did you GO, and WHAT did you DO, and WHO did you MEET?’

Try saying this yourself, putting stress on the key words. What do you notice? You should notice that the parts between the ‘beats’ are not said very strongly. They are called weak forms – where the words are pushed together, often with the weak /ə/ sound. In our very first examples, ‘are you’ became /əjə/.

When listening to English native speakers, you will hear these weak forms all the time. When *you* speak, you should think about trying to do the same. It is not ‘bad’ pronunciation, it is *natural* pronunciation, and in the IELTS test, this ‘beat’ of English is rewarded by the pronunciation band descriptors. Try reading a written text aloud. Put in the ‘beat’.

/ Dəjəundəstænd /?

### Exercise 2

Which words do you think are stressed in the following answer to an IELTS Speaking Test Part One question? Read it aloud. Read it aloud again, then again, and try to become natural in this. The answers, and some rules, are given in the Answer Section.

Actually, I prefer cats. You see, ... I have personal experience with cats. I grew up with them, and I really began to admire their grace, cleanliness, and attitude to life. I remember a bumper sticker I once read, which said, 'Dogs have masters; cats have servants.' And guess what? I actually like that attitude in cats. Seeing their complete self-indulgence actually makes me feel relaxed.

The features of speech in Exercise 1, and the pronunciation in Exercise 2, do not come by remembering sentences, or thinking too much about 'strategies'. If you memorise and calculate, you will probably speak in an unnatural and inappropriate way, and your score can be lowered for these reasons.

Basically, Features 1-10 come with knowing more 'English English', and not this unnatural 'IELTS English' given by people trying to milk the IELTS cow. Features 1-10 come as you develop a *naturalness* and *honesty* and *relaxation* about what you say. That is the basis of good speaking.

# Tip 2

## Some Useful Grammar

### Preliminary

Well, in the first tip I told you to relax, be honest and natural, and speak. So, in this tip, let us...hmmm... relax, be honest and natural, and speak. We can do this by looking at some common speaking grammar, and thus grammar that are common in the IELTS Speaking Test itself.

In the first part of the test, you will talk on *three* different topics, all of them personal to your life. In the second part, you will talk (at length) on *one* more personal topic. In the third and final part, the topics will be less personal, but the speaking is still *topic*-based, one after the other.

In summary, the Speaking Test is just a series of definite topics, most of them related to *your* life. *Your* life! Become used to speaking about this.

### Part One: Experiences

#### Exercise 3

Before doing anything, fill in the following table:

Base Form (V1)	Past Form (V2)	Past Part. (V3)	Base Form (V1)	Past Form (V2)	Past Part. (V3)	Base Form (V1)	Past Form (V2)	Past Part. (V3)
be			hold			see		
break			invest			smoke		
do			kill			steal		
donate			look			study		
drive			lose			swim		
fail			make			travel		
go			meet			win		
have			ride			write		

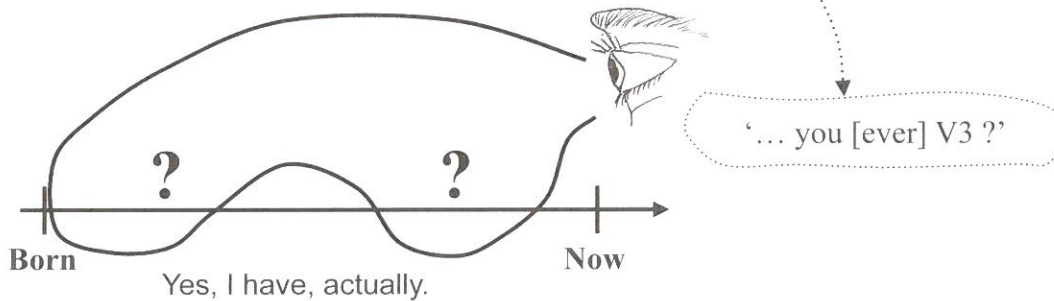


## Uncommon Experiences

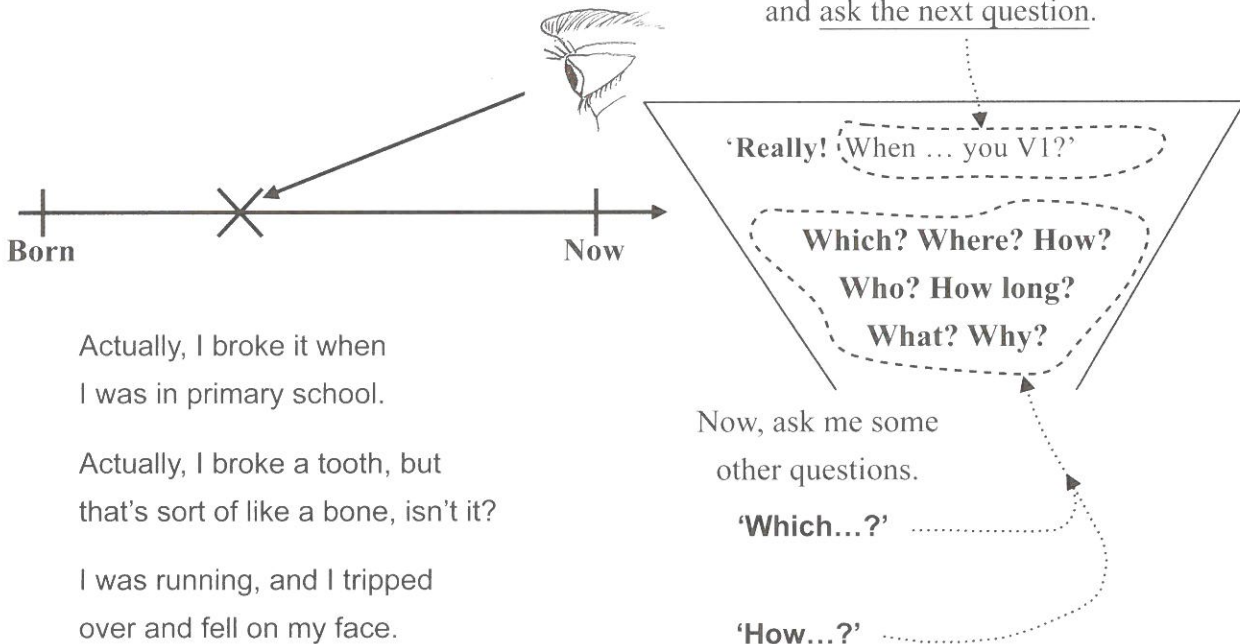
Well, let us look over *my* life, from when I was born until now. Let us consider the *uncommon* experience, 'To break a bone'.

Yes or no? My life? To break a bone?

Yes or no? Ask me a question.



Now, say '**Really!**'  
and ask the next question.



Now I have some questions for you. What tense did you use in the very first question? You should have used *Present Perfect Tense*, saying, 'Have you ever broken a bone?'

What tense did you use in the other questions? You should have used *Past Simple Tense*, saying, 'When did you break the bone?'

Present Perfect Tense is also known as Indefinite Past, referring to *any non-definite* time in the past. Past Simple is also known as Definite Past, referring to a definite time.

In this use, Present Perfect is for introducing or asking about unusual experiences ('To break a bone'), and Past Simple is used for discussing the specific experience in detail. This is a very common speaking grammar in English, and it is certainly possible that the examiner may use it, asking, 'Have you ever...?' to which you can reply, 'Yes, I have. It happened last year. I was...' and continue to talk about the experience using Past Simple Tense.

## Common Experiences

Let me ask another question. *Have you ever made a phone call?* Huh? Of course you have! Everyone has! 'Have you ever V3?' is only for *uncommon* experiences, and yet in the IELTS Speaking Test you may well be asked about normal topics. So how can we ask a meaningful question about these? One way is to ask when you *last* did it. That is, go directly to the Past Simple Tense.

Relax, be honest, and speak in this next exercise. There is a great deal of practice involved.

### Exercise 4

#### Past Time References

Put the following past time references in order according to your life.

a week ago	last Chinese New Year	this morning
a month ago	in January	this afternoon
two months ago	in 2007	yesterday
last week	when I was 19	a little while ago
last month	when I was 23	a long time ago
last year	when I was in high school	ages ago

#### Talking about Uncommon Experiences

Practise talking about the following less common experiences: all 30 of them. Use the question 'Have you ever V3?' to begin. The answer may be, 'Actually, I've never done that before.' In that case, say why.

### Uncommon Experiences

steal something	be in hospital	look after a baby
fail a test	be on TV	lose a lot of money
drive a truck	win an award	meet a famous person
donate blood	ride a horse	smoke cigarettes
swim naked	kill an animal	punch someone
go camping	go hiking	travel abroad
make a cake	hold a snake	have a bad accident
do the IELTS test	see a lightning strike	be in an earthquake
study a language (other than English)	write something for a magazine	invest in the stock market

### Talking about Common Experiences

Practise talking about the following *ordinary* experiences: another 24 of them. Use the question ‘**When did you last V1?**’ to begin.

Even though they *are* common experiences, the answer may be, ‘Actually, I’ve never done that before.’ In that case, say why.

### Common Experiences

eat chocolate	take a train	get a present
watch a DVD	have an argument	write a letter
ride a bicycle	go to the dentist	eat a hamburger
go swimming	cook a meal	go shopping
get a hair cut	visit a park	do some exercise
go to a restaurant	travel in a plane	take a photograph
use a computer	go to the cinema	drink a soft drink
drink alcohol	drink coffee	go out with friends

## Part Two: Everyday Routines

Let us keep relaxing, being honest and natural, and speaking, by looking at another useful grammar for the IELTS Test, all based on the fact that IELTS speaking is very *topic*-based, and

*personal* to your life.

However, first, I must put in two short exercises. Why? Because there is a good chance to do it right now, and Tip 3 will tell me to take these opportunities whenever I can. First, I have a few vocabulary questions (Exercise 5), then we can do some further practice (Exercise 6). Use your dictionary if you need to.

## Exercise 5

Answer the questions.

1. What is the object on the right hand side?
2. What does this object show?
3. What 'scale' does it use?
4. Do you have one of these?
5. Have you ever used one of these? [Really!...]
6. If you put it in your mouth, what level will it show?
7. What happens at 100?
8. What happens at zero?
9. How do we describe when it is *lower* than zero?
10. Who uses these in their jobs? Why?



Okay, it is a *thermometer*, and it shows the *temperature*, usually measured in *degrees Celsius*. It can show *body temperature* (about 37 degrees), and at 100 degrees, water *boils*; at zero degrees, water *freezes*; and sometimes a temperature can be *below zero*, or *minus* degrees. Doctors, nurses, and medical staff use these all the time. Maybe you see a thermometer hanging on your wall everyday – but do you think about the *topic*, ‘temperature’ and ‘weather’?

## Exercise 6

Ask and answer the following very ‘IELTSy’ questions.

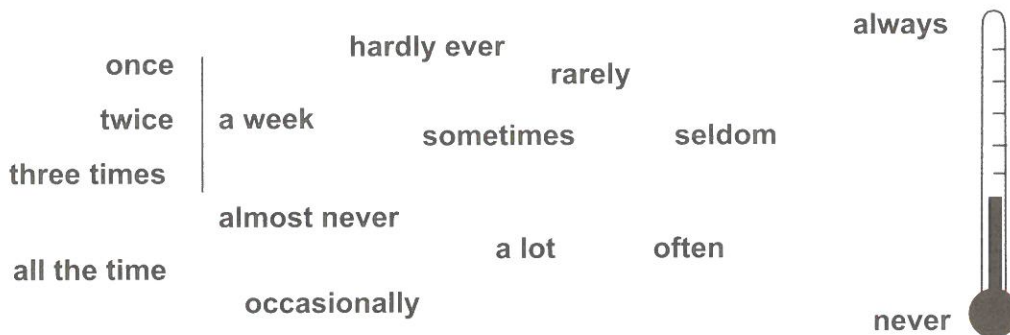
1. Which season do you prefer? Why?
2. Describe the seasons in your country?
3. Would you like to live in a snowy country?

4. Do you complain much about the weather?
5. What is the usual temperature in your country?
6. Does your country sometimes have severe weather?
7. How do people react to very high, or low, temperatures?
8. How is the weather different in different parts of your country?
9. Can you describe when some severe weather last happened?
10. Do you believe that the climate in your country is changing? Why (not)?

After Exercises 5 and 6, I should move back to the point of this tip. As well as experiences over the course of your life, in the IELTS Speaking Test you will be asked many personal questions about your life *now*, and what could be more personal than your present habits, hobbies, routines, and customs – that is, activities we do again and again. In these topics, adverbs/adverbial phrases of frequency are ‘frequently’ used. What are they? Look at the next exercise.

### Exercise 7

Put the following words in the right place on our thermometer. Two of them have already been done for you.



once  
twice  
three times  
all the time

hardly ever  
rarely  
sometimes  
a lot  
often

a week  
seldom  
almost never  
occasionally

always  
never

How did you go with Exercise 7? Did you have the order: always/all the time/often/a lot – occasionally/sometimes – seldom/rarely/hardly ever/almost never/never, with once/twice/three times a week somewhere in the top half? Let us now use these words to talk about your *present* habits, hobbies, routines, and customs, since such questions are also likely to appear in the IELTS Test.

## Exercise 8

Work with a friend, or just ask yourself.

	<i>How often do you use a computer?</i>			
<i>Really? When</i>	<i>do you</i> <b>[V1]</b>		<i>it</i> ?	<b>[Your answers]</b>
<i>Where</i>			?	
<i>Why</i>			?	
<i>Who</i>			<i>with</i> ?	

Now keep going with some other ideas. If the answer is ‘I don’t’, use our Part One grammar, and ask, ‘Have you ever V3?’ If the answer is still, ‘No’, say why.

How often do you...	• play sport	• walk in a park	• drink a soft-drink	
	• eat fast-food	• go swimming	• go to restaurants	
	• drink alcohol	• brush your teeth	• comb your hair	
	• send email	• get a haircut	• take a holiday	
	• see your parents	• go to the cinema	• use the phone	
	• fly in a plane	• eat seafood	• go to parties	
	• get angry	• write letters	• take photos	

The grammar in these tips will help you in the IELTS Speaking Test by giving you the ability and naturalness to speak about personal topics. Did I say topics? Read on.

## Tip 3

### 'Topic-ise' Your Life

#### Hint 1: Grab Topics

I am hand-writing this right now in a living room in an old house in I-Lan, Taiwan, on Day 2 of the Chinese New Year holiday. I am sitting on a sofa; my little son and his cousins are playing Internet-based computer games, and arguing about whose turn it is to play. My brother-in-law is sleeping on the other sofa. We have just returned from a meal at a restaurant with the family. I can hear the occasional 'bang' of a fire-cracker outside, and smell the smoke from 'spirit' money being burnt on the street.

Well, that is a scene from everyday life – just one minute of it – and how many topics is that? Here are 15.

- |                             |                       |                  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Pens/pencils/drawing     | 6. The Internet       | 11. Relatives    |
| 2. Houses/apartments        | 7. Computer games     | 12. Noise        |
| 3. New Year's customs       | 8. Arguing/arguments  | 13. Fireworks    |
| 4. Furniture                | 9. Sleeping/napping   | 14. Pollution    |
| 5. Children/having children | 10. Restaurants/meals | 15. Burning/fire |

Well, let us 'expand' the last subject into some related questions.

#### Exercise 9

Ask and answer the following 'burning' questions. Extend your answers. Say why? Give examples.

1. What things do *you* usually burn?
2. Have you ever accidentally burnt yourself?
3. Have you ever made a natural fire?
4. Are there many *accidental* fires in your country?

- 5. Have you ever seen one of these fires?
- 6. What safety measures are there against these?
- 7. What are the good uses of fire?
- 8. What fuels are burnt for cooking?
- 9. What objects are burnt for celebrations?
- 10. Do you think these previous two methods are changing?

Very IELTSy. Look at the other 14 topics. Make questions, then ask and answer them. Use the grammar from Tip 2.

Have you ever **[V3]**? [drawn, done, used, had, played...]

How often do you **[V1]**? [use, eat, see, go to, meet...]

When did you last

I hope you understand the point. Start 'topic-ising' your everyday experiences into little talks. Practise a few every night. When you are having a shower, talk about water/showering. If you see a thermometer on the wall, talk (as we did in Tip 2) about temperature and/or the weather. Every object and idea that you meet in everyday life is a *topic*, and could be in your next IELTS Speaking Test.

Let us *grab* some topics to talk about by using another very useful IELTS speaking grammar. Firstly, ask *me* the following questions.

What... (be) interested \_\_\_\_\_?

Who... (sometimes) argue \_\_\_\_\_?

I hope you ask, 'What are you *interested in*?' and 'Who do you sometimes *argue with*?' using a stress on the italicised words.

Look at underlined words. They are prepositions, and often go at the end of informal questions. Prepositions are those small 'pointing' words, showing the position between two objects or concepts. This can be the physical position ('My *hand* is **on** the *table*') or the relationship ('I often complain **about** the *weather*'). Prepositions are always followed by nouns ('I am interested **in** playing *chess*', 'I'm afraid **of** being *touched*'). English uses many prepositions in its grammar, more than many other languages, and they can be difficult. Try the following exercise.



 **Exercise 10**

**Part One**

Fill in the gaps with a preposition, then check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

**Prepositions After Adjectives**



- |              |            |                |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. What      | interested | _____          |
| 2. What      | afraid     | _____          |
| 3. -         | worried    | _____ anything |
| 4. What      | good       | _____          |
| 5. What food | fond       | _____          |

**Prepositions After Verbs**



- |                       |                               |                |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 6. Who                | (sometimes) argue             | _____          |
| 7. What               | (usually) argue               | _____          |
| 8. What               | (often) laugh                 | _____          |
| 9. What               | (usually) take photos         | _____          |
| 10. What              | (usually) complain            | _____          |
| 11. -                 | believe                       | _____ God?     |
| 12. Who               | (sometimes) get angry         | _____          |
| 13. Which restaurants | like to eat                   | _____          |
| 14. Who               | (usually) go out              | _____          |
| 15. What              | (usually) dream               | _____          |
| 16. -                 | (sometimes) cry               | _____ anything |
| 17. What duties       | [your job] consist            | _____          |
| 18. Who               | (usually) write               | _____          |
| 19. What              | (have you recently) succeeded | _____          |
| 20. What              | [IELTS score] hope            | _____          |

## Part Two

These questions are on 20 different topics! The questions are informal, personal, and friendly – in other words, very IELTSy. Now, ask and answer *all* of these questions. Work with a friend if possible. Give extra information. Say why. Give examples.

'Actually, I'm quite good at playing chess. Well, not *really* good because I long ago realised, with a somewhat sinking heart, that I lacked the *real* talent needed to be a *truly* great player along the lines of Kasparov or Fischer, but still, a lifetime's obsession with the game has seen me become pretty good, in fact better than most people, although it's all relative of course. When I was a kid I joined a chess club...'

## Hint 2: Use Stress for Clarification and Correction

Talking about many different topics might be confusing. You might need to clarify or correct them at times. Using stress for clarification and correction is a very important feature of pronunciation, and would certainly impress an IELTS examiner. Let us practise this with an exercise. Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

### Exercise 11

#### Part One

How does stress on a particular word change the meaning of a sentence? Complete the following. The first one has been done as an example.

**Steven** liked the singer with the red dress, but *John did not*.

Steven **liked** the singer with the red dress, but...

Steven liked the **singer** with the red dress, but...

Steven liked the singer with the **red** dress, but...

Steven liked the singer with the red **dress**, but...

Now practise saying the sentences, putting stress on the bolded words.

## Part Two

The answer is, 'Steven gave Susie a pencil.' But how would you say this if the question was:

- |                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Who gave Susie a pencil?      | 3. Who did Steven give a pencil to? |
| 2. How did Susie get the pencil? | 4. What did Steven give Susie?      |

## Part Three

Look at the following four sentences. Why do we stress the bold words?

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. I want a big red book.                     | Here. [Big red cup].    |
| 2. <b>No</b> , I want a big red <b>book</b> . | Here. [Big blue book].  |
| 3. <b>No</b> , I want a big <b>red</b> book.  | Here. [Small red book]. |
| 4. <b>No</b> , I want a <b>big</b> red book.  | We don't have one.      |

Try saying sentences 1-4 yourself. Now, decide where the stress goes on the following four sentences (5-8), and then practise saying them yourself.

- |                                     |                             |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 5. I want a small white coffee.     | Here. [Small black coffee]. |
| 6. No, I want a small white coffee. | Here. [Small white tea].    |
| 7. No, I want a small white coffee. | Here. [Large white coffee]. |
| 8. No, I want a small white coffee. | We don't have one.          |

## Tip 4

### Respond to the Situation

#### Preliminary

The next two tips need some explanation. Let me begin by saying that the IELTS Speaking Test is not simply a test situation. It is true that you are talking to an ‘examiner’, but any speaking happens in:

1. a situation,
2. a background culture – in this case, western culture.

Responding to these will help everyone, especially you. We need to closely consider the situation and culture in turn. This tip, Tip 4, will look at the situation.

#### Part One: Wrong Comments to Make

The IELTS test situation is:

1. *not* formal. It is not a lecture, presentation, speech, job interview, or role-play. You do not need to impress the examiner in any way except with your speaking.
2. very ‘open’, without ‘Task Fulfilment’ or ‘Task Response’ judgements.
3. face-to-face, meaning that you see each others’ face and body.

So, what does this mean for you? It means you should *not*...

- be unfriendly, or have no expression on your face,
- constantly look away from the examiner – for example, by looking at the table,
- show no emotion or interest in your own words [See Tip 19],
- ‘learn’ artificial language which you believe is more formal,
- ignore your hands, face, and body, as a way to further make your message clear, or help you speak better.

It also means that you do not need to:

- call examiners 'sir' or 'madam',
- shake their hand before or after the test.

Although it is an informal situation, it *is* still a test, and there are rules. This means you should not make the comments in the next exercise.

## Exercise 12

What is wrong with these candidates' comments?

### During the Test

1. You are dressed so well.
2. It's so nice of you to come here today.
3. What do you think of my English?
4. Why do *you* like cats?
5. I really *really* need to get an IELTS six.
6. My full name is Huang Li Fu, but you can call me Cliff.

### After the Test

7. The examiner was unfriendly. He looked too serious.
8. The examiner did not answer my questions.

You should immediately know that Answer 1 is bad because you should not compliment or flatter the examiner. Examiners are paid for their work, and there is nothing 'nice' about their willingness to test you [Answer 2]. They cannot comment on your English [Answer 3]. They also have to follow rules, and cannot speak freely [Answer 4], and it is *you* who need to do most of the speaking. Also, they do not want to know about your personal life or pressures [Answer 5].

As for Answer 6, firstly, let us consider how almost every student seems to love saying, '...but you can call me [English Name]'. What is wrong with this? Nothing much, but keep in mind the following three thoughts.

1. When examiners ask for your name, they are just following a test requirement, so that your identity is clear on the recording device.
2. If you want to give your English name, you could give it *before* the test begins – during the 'small talk'. At least then it *is* natural, and it may help the examiner and you develop a better understanding of each other, which may have a good effect.
3. The '... but you can call me...' sets a 'mechanical' tone, especially in pronunciation.

Logically then, why can you not *vary* this a little into something more personal to you, and set a ‘real’ speaking tone. Make it clear from the beginning that you are not a result of bad IELTS material.

Hello  
[Examiner’s  
name]; my full  
name is Huang  
Li Fu

- or ‘Cliff’ if you like.
- although I sometimes use the name, ‘Cliff’.
- but, to my English speaking friends, I’m called ‘Cliff’.
- otherwise known as ‘Cliff’ in an English speaking context.
- but I could give you an English name if you want, and that name would be ‘Cliff’.
- ‘Li Fu’ being my first name, and sounding a little like ‘Cliff’, my English name.

I suppose that now, you want to memorise these, which actually breaks the purpose of giving them. Think of your own variations, and then do not think much at all.

As for the last two responses in Exercise 12, IELTS examiners are people, and there are natural variations in the way they act. Some may smile more, be more encouraging; some may do these less than others. Expect this, and do not worry about it.

Remember also that it is the examiner’s job to follow a script, and encourage *you* to speak. This means that you should expect a ‘lack of engagement’. It is not unfriendly; it is just to make sure that the test is fair for everyone. In Parts One and Two, the only questions that a candidate can ask (and receive an answer to), are the ‘closed’ questions:

1. What does [Word] mean?
2. Can you repeat that question?

You will not receive an answer to ‘open’ questions, such as:

1. ~~What does that question mean?~~
2. ~~Can you explain that?~~

In short, remember, examiners must follow procedure, are well-trained, probably a bit tired, and they have to deal with many aspects of the test at the same time – namely:

1. controlling the recording device,
2. following the speaking script, and the speaking topics,
3. keeping to the timing,

4. judging *four* categories of your speaking, and...
5. doing the paperwork.

The smoother the test goes for the examiner, the better it is for you, so follow the rules.

## Part Two: Wrong Ways to Answer

Straight into an exercise.

### Exercise 13

What is wrong with the speakers' answers in the following cases?

#### Case 1

**Examiner:** Do you have any hobbies?

**Speaker:** YesIhavemanyhobbiesIlikewatchingTVandthanksforaskingmethis. IwatchTV everyeveningmyfavouriteprogramisa... **[and so on, for three minutes].**

#### Case 2

**Examiner:** Why do people have hobbies?

**Speaker:** I like watching TV because it has many entertaining programs.

**Examiner:** Why do *people* have hobbies?

**Speaker:** Well, TV relaxes me. When I was watching it last night... **[and so on].**

#### Case 3

**Examiner:** What electronic devices do young people like?

**Speaker:** They like the Internet; they like MP3 players; they like i-pods; they like smart phones, and mobile phones. They like USB sticks and PSP, and they like Kindle as well.

**Examiner:** What's your favourite food?

**Speaker:** I like noodles, chicken, and I like rice. I like meat, pork, and sometimes bacon. I like eggs, and vegetables. I like eggplant, spinach, and carrots. I eat beans and peas, and fruit...

## Case 4

**Examiner:** Why do people generally like to eat in restaurants?

**Speaker:** I think people generally like to eat in restaurants because... **[Answer]**.

**Examiner:** Why do young people often prefer rock music to classical music?

**Speaker:** I think young people often prefer rock music to classical music because rock music is different to classical music, so young people prefer rock music to classical music, but some prefer classical music, and not just rock music, but rock music is more popular generally than classical music.

## Case 5

**Examiner:** Why do people prefer going to cinemas to watching TV?

**Speaker:** I would attribute this phenomenon to many causes, the most prevalent being the alleviation of pressure consequent to the psychological conflicts in modern society. *Not only* is the cinema very relaxing, *but* it is *also* a social activity allowing various other activities. People can *not only* have time with their families, *but* they can *also* be entertained.

**Case 1** is common. Some students think ‘fast = fluent’; however, speaking unnaturally fast will lead to problems which may lower your score. The ‘Fluency & Coherence’ category in the public version of the Speaking Band Descriptors does not mention about speed in Band Six or higher. These higher band scores expect you to speak with:

1. little self-correction, hesitation, or repetition,
2. clearly developed topics, at some length,
3. a flow of speech, with appropriate discourse markers **[See Tip 6]**.

This is not about speed. Remember, native speakers of English often speak quite slowly (but follow the previous Points 1 to 3). So, do not try to ‘rush’ or ‘force’ your speaking.

Also, sometimes you first need to think a little in order to give a good answer, and this is natural and understood by IELTS examiners and the band descriptors. Remember though, thinking for *ideas* is fine, but thinking for *words* is not. Thinking for words means being *unable to speak*. A few ‘thinking’ silences may help you, particularly if this is made clear by ‘body language’ – see Part Three. However, if your silences are becoming long, then Tips 17 and 18 will help you deal with that.

Moving onto Exercise 13, Case 2, the examiner has asked a general question, about *people*



generally, not the *speaker personally*. However, the speaker keeps trying to answer *personally*. In Tip 14, Hint 2, we will also look at this. There is no ‘task fulfilment’ category in IELTS speaking, but the more experienced examiner will realise that you are speaking *personally* because it is easier. The examiner will realise that you do not have the English ability to handle *general* or *unfamiliar* topics. You may be IELTS Vocabulary Five:

Has *some* words for *familiar* and *unfamiliar* topics

... but you are not IELTS Vocabulary Six:

Has words for a *wide* variety of topics.

[See the Vocabulary Band Descriptors in Tip 7, Hint 1].

So, when asked a *general* question, if you can only speak *personally*, or prefer to explain a point through a personal example [which is often very good – See Tip 19], then you need to ‘signpost’ this to the examiner using ‘discourse markers’ [See Tip 6] or a direct statement. You could say:

- *As for myself*, I guess...
- Well, *speaking personally here*, I can say that *I* like TV because...
- I’m not sure, but *personally* I can say that watching TV can...
- Perhaps I can answer that by looking first *at myself*. I like TV because...
- Perhaps *my own* reasons can illustrate an answer. TV relaxes me...
- In fact [**past time reference, eg. ‘just last week’**], I...

This could be linked back to the *general* view with a concluding statement beginning with ‘So...’. In our example, you could say:

- So,
- I think other people would generally feel the same way.
  - probably most people have hobbies for the same reasons as me.
  - I’m probably typical of most people in this respect.
  - I guess most people would feel similar to that.
  - that’s probably why people like TV.

In Case 3, the speaker is simply *listing* items – which does not create a variety of grammar or vocabulary, or allow much use of features of pronunciation. *Do not list!* Just pick one or two items, then talk about them in more detail [See also Tip 8].

In Case 4, the speaker’s first answer repeats the question words; the second answer also repeats the question words, and then continues repeating them. This is an ‘overuse’ of words, and the

public version of the IELTS Fluency & Coherence Band Descriptors tells us:

IELTS Five	=	Uses <i>repetition</i> to keep speaking
IELTS Four	=	Uses <i>much</i> repetition to keep speaking

... so the Speaker in Case 4 could only receive one of these scores. Remember, it is not just the *number* of words you use, but the *way* you use them, which gives you a good score. Good speakers do not repeat. So, the better answers for Case 4 are:

### Case 4 [Better Answers]

**Examiner:** Why do people generally like to eat in restaurants?

**Speaker:** Well, for a start, it's certainly convenient, because someone else is doing all the cooking and cleaning... **[And so on]**.

**Examiner:** Why do young people often prefer rock music to classical music?

**Speaker:** I have no idea really. Who knows what's in the mind of young people. Maybe because they are *young*, and full of *energy*, they want a style of music that reflects this... **[And so on]**.

Notice that the speaker can not think of an immediate answer to the questions, particularly the second one, so used a 'buying time' technique. This *is* natural, and Tip 17 will look at this.

Finally, in Case 5, the speaker may be using memorised 'fluff' but at least this 'fluff' provides a relevant answer to the question. Memorisation may affect the speaker's pronunciation band score, but let us assume here that the answer *is* given naturally, in which case we must consider the benefits of using phrases such as 'attribute this phenomenon', 'alleviation of pressure' and 'psychological conflicts in modern society'. Good or bad? Very good, in IELTS Writing, Task Two. However, in the IELTS Speaking Test, it is inappropriate and bad.

The phrasing used in Case 5 does not respond to the *informality* of the situation. This informality is shown in the public version of the Band Descriptors, which, for Lexical Resource, reward 'idiomatic' vocabulary, not 'formal' complicated words. These band descriptors tell us that:

IELTS Nine	=		<i>idiomatic</i> language naturally.
IELTS Eight	=	uses	<i>idiomatic</i> vocabulary skillfully.
IELTS Seven	=		some <i>idiomatic</i> vocabulary.
IELTS Six	=		language mostly appropriately.

So, it is the *casual* language, with *spoken* idioms and slang, which measures good word-use in the IELTS speaking test. Formal language, including the ‘not only ... but also’ model, just sounds unnatural and memorised, and usually is, often from books written by Chinese authors. Thus, in Case 5, a much better example is:

**Examiner:** Why do people prefer going to cinemas to watching TV?

**Speaker:** It's pretty obvious when you think about it. With everyone stressed to their eyeballs with work and mortgages, and throw in the two point five kids on top of that, people need somewhere to chill out, or otherwise [*smiling, shrugging the shoulders*] get to know their girlfriends in the privacy of the darkness, like I used to.

Smiling? Shrugging the shoulders? This leads to the next hint.

## Part Three: Body Language

In the IELTS Speaking test, some silent thinking is fine – as long as it is clear that you *are* thinking for *ideas*, not thinking for *words*. ‘Body language’ usually helps make this clear, and body language is an important part of IELTS preparation. It is *very* much a part of the situation.

### Exercise 14

Which speaker is better? Why?

**Examiner:** Tell me about the last time you traveled?

**Speaker A:** [*mouth drops open, looks scared, stares from side to side, licks his lips, closes his mouth, and swallows again*]

**Speaker B:** [*turns head aside, and stares into the distance*]

**Speaker C:** [*turns head aside, rubs chin ‘thoughtfully’, and stares ‘mystically’ into the distance, nods head ‘wisely’, and finally says,] Well, that’s an intriguing question.”*

There are many ‘body’ signs that people naturally use to show that they are *about to* speak, but first wanting to organising some thoughts in their head. There are equally many ‘body’ signs that

show a speaker does not know how to give an answer. If you *really cannot answer a question*, think about...

1. 'thinking' first,
2. showing this *naturally* with body language,
3. using Tip 17: Buy Time.

This is exactly what native speakers do. So, in Exercise 14, Speaker C gives the best answer, right? Wrong! Remember – be honest. The Speaking Test is not an 'acting' performance, and doing this is silly and unnecessary (and yet taught by some IELTS 'preparation' material). It may also lower your mark. If you know an answer, *just give it!*

### Exercise 15

In an IELTS Speaking Test, which of the following examples of body language do you think are good, and which are bad? Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Putting your hands together as if praying | 11. Putting your hand on your cheek |
| 2. Fiddling/fidgeting/gripping your hands    | 12. Open and closing your mouth     |
| 3. Putting your arms across the chest        | 13. Putting your palms upwards      |
| 4. Staring aside for a while                 | 14. Looking at your fingers         |
| 5. Touching your nose                        | 15. Raising your eyebrows           |
| 6. Staring at the floor                      | 16. Stroking your chin              |
| 7. Pursing your lips                         | 17. Tapping the table               |
| 8. Biting your nails                         | 18. Licking your lips               |
| 9. Swallowing                                | 19. Pulling your ear                |
| 10. Smiling                                  | 20. Grimacing                       |

If you are asked a question, and you do not know the English words to answer it, one of the best actions is to *smile*. Be honest about this. Think of some funny thought, or amusing time in your life, and smile. There is a great deal of research which suggests smiling can create good changes in your body, your mood, and your thinking. Also think about Tip 17.

Sorry, I was just thinking about...

That question reminds me about...

## Tip 5

### Respond to the Culture

#### Part One: Subject Matter

The IELTS Speaking test follows *western* cultural patterns, and there is often misunderstanding about this. Look at the next exercise.

#### Exercise 16

Speaker [after the test]

- He argued with me.
- He was too forceful.
- He said I was wrong.
- He scared me.
- He talked about nasty things.
- He never smiled.

Western culture is more 'individual' and 'assertive'. There are fewer 'face' issues compared to Asian cultures. Expect to be challenged in some ways. You will be asked the reasons for your opinions. Examiners will give counter examples to test your speaking. You can expect questions such as:

- So why do you think that?
- But some people might say that [opposite view].
- Do you think most people feel that way?

Similarly, in western culture, people talk openly about issues which may not be discussed so much in other cultures, such as religion/beliefs, violence/crime, male/female and old/young comparisons. So, expect questions about many subjects, some of them personal. And how are you expected to answer? Read on.

## Part Two: How Not to Answer

In western culture, people are expected to be honest, ready to give information, and to not pretend or be 'sneaky'. This means you are expected to give direct and honest answers. The informal situation, and the informal nature of speaking itself, mean that you have 'room to move' around the question, but it would *not* be good to follow the examples in the next exercise.

### Exercise 17

What is wrong with the speakers' answers in the following cases?

#### Case 1

**Examiner:** Do you have any hobbies?

**Speaker:** I have five members in my family. I have an older brother, and a younger sister. This means...

**Examiner:** Do you have any hobbies?

**Speaker:** My older brother is studying engineering at Shi-da University. My younger sister is still in high school.

#### Case 2

**Examiner:** Do you... ?

**Speaker:** I was born in Taichung, which is a very mountainous area.

**Examiner:** Do you have... ?

**Speaker:** As well as mountainous areas, it has very good facilities. Let me explain them to you. Firstly, there are...

#### Case 3

**Examiner:** Do you have any hobbies?

**Speaker:** Yes, that is an intriguing question, about which many people often have conflicting answers. I personally, being a robust and sturdy outdoorsman, like mountain climbing, wherever possible without the benefits of oxygen.

## Case 4

**Examiner:** Do you have any hobbies?

**Speaker:** Yes. I like watching television. The first reason why I like watching television-which-was-invented-mid-last-century-is-that-there-are-many-absorbing-and-carefully-crafted-programs-for-the-edification-of-the-viewers. The-second-reason-is-television-is-accessible-to-the-multitude-of-citizens-enabling-them-to-receive-rapturous-enlightenment-at-a-comparatively-low-cost.

Now let us consider these cases. It is *not* good to:

- Case 1: give an answer not connected to the question.
- Case 2: talk over the top of the examiner.
- Case 3: lie (and give a memorised answer).
- Case 4: give a memorised answer.

Let us consider Case 4 more closely. You might know that there are many books with prepared answers for you to remember, all sorted into themes and topics. A good strategy? You might think that if the speaking topic is one for which you already have a memorised or prepared answer, then you must be lucky, and you can immediately give that prepared answer. However, there are many problems with this. Here are seven of them.

- 1. Appropriacy** As Tip 4 has shown, students are often speaking too formally for the situation ['I would attribute this phenomenon to a multitude of reasons.'] How do you think examiners respond to this?
- 2. Dishonesty** As this tip will show, memorisation goes against western culture, which expects honesty. So is *obvious* dishonesty likely to impress examiners?
- 3. Meaning** By applying memorised pieces to any topic, students sometimes create sentences which do not 'work' – for example: 'As far as I'm concerned, I live in Taiwan'.
- 4. Grammar mistakes** Memory is sometimes not perfect, and because it is not 'real' speaking, students often make mistakes. ['The idea is highly convenience.']
- 5. Consistency** When the next topic comes – a topic that the students are *not* familiar with, their speaking level falls to its 'true' level. On which pieces of speech do you think examiners judge you: the 'false' prepared answer, or the real one? So, does the memorised piece help or not?

- 6. Irrelevance** Can students be sure they are actually answering the question? If they are not, how do you think examiners judge the speaking?
- 7. Pronunciation** Students are not speaking with true belief in their words. There is no feeling or emotion. Do you think sounding similar to a robot is good for your pronunciation band score?

How can I prove this? Well, the IELTS band descriptors tell us so. Looking at the public version, your score goes higher when you:

- develop topics meaningfully
- use appropriate words
- show clear meaning
- use them with style
- use appropriate connectives
- use a range of pronunciation features
- use them flexibly
- use them flexibly

Memorisation can act against all of these. Mostly, it goes against Tips 1 and 19 in this book, and these two tips are the basis of good speaking.

So, what should you do if the examiner introduces a topic on which you *do* have a memorised answer? Well, if you want to be appropriate, clear in meaning, natural in pronunciation, consistent, relevant, and be *rewarded* by the band descriptors, follow Tip 1 and Tip 19 by saying:

### Case 5

**Examiner:** Do you have any hobbies?

**Speaker:** Hey, that's a pretty standard question. *[smiling]* I suppose I could give you a model answer I memorised from a book, with lots of fancy words, but you probably wouldn't be impressed with that, would you?

**Examiner:** *[smiling; shaking his head]*

**Speaker:** It's a pity, because it had words like 'multitude' and 'rapturous' which looked so good, at least on paper. I don't think that's gonna work though. Well, I don't want to lie, so I'd have to say no, I don't have any hobbies, although I do watch TV, as most people do. It's pretty boring as far as hobbies go, but I'll claim that as a hobby, okay?

Now, that *does* respond to the situation and culture, and *is* a very very good answer.



# Tip 6

## About Discourse Markers

### Preliminary

In Tip 1 we listed some features of natural speech. We also said that they come with time and practice. That does not mean we should ‘give up’ on all of them. There *are* some natural features of speaking that we should try to use, but we need to use them appropriately – *not* as shown in the following exercise.

### Exercise 18

What is wrong with the speakers’ answers to the question, ‘Do you have any hobbies?’

**Speaker A:** [At the beginning]

- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss this issue.
- If someone were to ask me that question, then I think I’d have to say that, generally, ...
- Hmm. Let me share my thoughts with you on that issue.

[At the end]

- So, all in all, that is why my hobby is watching television.
- So, to conclude, when comparing everything, I definitely like watching television.
- So, summing up all that, I’d have to say that I definitely like watching television.

<b>Speaker B</b>	I tend to think that [Answer]...	Well, [Answer].
	I tend to think that [Answer]...	Well, [Answer].
	I tend to think that [Answer]...	Well, [Answer].

- Speaker C:**
- Well, ...
  - As I see it, ...
  - I'd have to say that...
  - As far as I'm concerned, ...
  - When considering this question, I am inclined to think that...
  - There are a great number of thoughts about this issue, and at this particular junction, I would like to give some of mine. Given all this, ...

my hobby is listening to music.

We need to look at two features of natural speaking, as follows.

1. **Connectives**, which are those little words which join together the parts of your message,
2. **Discourse markers**, which also relate pieces to each other, but also explain the logic, emotions, or feelings behind what you say.

The public version of the IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors says:

Fluency and coherence: 2. Uses discourse markers and connectives		
5	6	7
may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers	uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility

Extracted from the complete IELTS SPEAKING Band Descriptors (public version).

In Exercise 18, let us imagine Speaker A giving a full answer. Despite speaking fairly fluently and at length (deserving a Fluency Band Score Six), the student would use so many of these discourse markers that they would become 'over-used', leading to a Fluency Band Score Five!

Speaker B has a similar issue, repeating 'tend to think' and 'Well' all the time, even when no one would do so. Sometimes something 'is', or 'is not', and never 'tends to be' – for example, your name. Despite speaking fluently and at length, this speaker does not use 'tend to think' correctly, or use a *range* of discourse markers. Again, this shows Fluency Band Score Five, whatever the fluency may be. Speaker C also misuses that common discourse marker 'Well'. Perhaps we need to examine this word.

Well = I am receiving the message, and thinking about it.

When saying a simple answer ('My hobby is listening to music.'), beginning with 'well' does *not* make sense. It just shows the examiner that you are dishonest, and a Fluency Band Score Five. The discourse marker 'Well' must be followed by an answer which *shows the need for thinking time*. For example:

Well, [pause]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it depends.</li> <li>• sort of.</li> <li>• in some ways.</li> <li>• not really. You see, ...</li> <li>• if you call just...</li> <li>• I'm not sure exactly.</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Logical answer/ explanation/ elaboration]</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listening to music,</li> <li>• I suppose, although...</li> </ul>	<p><b>[Explanation about why the question happens to be not as simple as it seems]</b></p>

Speaker C's next two answers use discourse markers which mark *opinions*, but the question only asks for a simple *fact*. These discourse markers need to be used for more complicated and speculative answers. For example:

- As I see it, ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the traffic here definitely needs a total re-organisation.</li> </ul>
- I'd have to say that...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• global warming has still not necessarily been proven.</li> <li>• politicians seldom seek to improve the country, but merely serve themselves.</li> </ul>

As we will learn from the next few exercises, 'As far as I'm concerned' means 'The answer I am about to give is quite different from what many others think', and, as with the last two discourse markers, cannot be used for facts. This discourse marker is often used for very strong statements (since such statements are likely to be different from what many others think). For example:

As far as I'm concerned, ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you're a total loser.</li> <li>• all of you can go to hell!</li> <li>• this job sucks!</li> </ul>	<p><b>[real life situation]</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• politicians are all self-serving hypocrites.</li> <li>• the traffic here is a total mess.</li> <li>• swimming pools are disgustingly unsanitary.</li> </ul>	<p><b>[IELTS situation]</b></p>

Speaker C’s last two answers are memorised ‘fluff’, illogical and unnatural to the question and the situation. Let us compare the speakers in Exercise 18 to the speaker just before that, at the end of Tip 5. This better speaker uses...

- discourse markers [‘Hey’, ‘I suppose’, ‘would you?’, ‘It’s a pity’, ‘Well’, ‘as far as... go’, ‘okay?’,] naturally and honestly...
- the words ‘multitude’ and ‘rapturous’, but this time uses them *appropriately*, and *consistently* with the rest of the speaking...
- effective sentence stress and tone...

... giving at  
least a Band  
Score Seven  
for...

Fluency  
Vocabulary  
Pronunciation

So, discourse markers are a sign of good speakers, but they are also difficult and dangerous. Using them without thinking (as much bad IELTS ‘preparation’ material ‘teaches’) may give you a Fluency Band Score Five. We need to look at discourse markers very carefully.

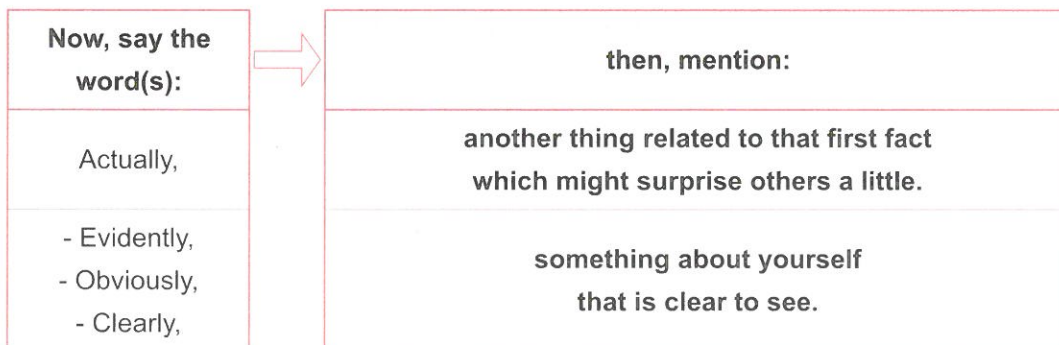
## Part One: Using Discourse Markers

What is a discourse marker exactly? *Actually*, there is no exact definition, but ‘actually’ at the beginning of this sentence is an example. It means something such as, ‘the answer I am about to give might surprise you a little’. ‘Actually’ is a piece of language to ‘mark’ or show something about the ‘discourse’, or speaking. It helps us give our message. There are many discourse markers, and we can practise using some of the more useful ones in the following four-part exercise.

### Exercise 19

#### Part One

Firstly, give a few facts about your life.



Incidentally,	<p><b>something interesting about yourself that no one knows.</b></p> <p><b>why this is so.</b></p> <p><b>a logical consequence to this interesting fact.</b></p> <p><b>an illogical consequence to this interesting fact.</b></p> <p><b>a final comment about that fact.</b> [‘Summing up, ...’]</p>
You see,	
Naturally,	
Surprisingly,	
Anyway,	
<p>- Okay,</p> <p>- Right,</p> <p>- So,</p>	<p><b>a country in the world that you don’t know much about.</b> [‘I’d like to talk a little bit about ...’]</p> <p><b>an intelligent guess about people’s behaviour in that country.</b></p>
Presumably,	
Apparently,	<p><b>a custom that you think people in that country follow (but you are not sure about).</b></p> <p><b>something about your country that others know or can guess.</b> [‘ ... in <i>my</i> country...’]</p> <p><b>examples of what you just said, or well-known facts.</b></p>
(But) As you (might) know,	
... you know,	
<p>- Okay,</p> <p>- Right,</p> <p>- So,</p> <p>- Frankly,</p> <p>- To be honest,</p>	<p><b>a member of your family, or a relative, who you don’t like.</b> [‘Let’s now talk about...’]</p> <p><b>something bad this person.</b></p> <p><b>something good about that same person.</b></p> <p><b>a sad aspect or a sad event that happened to that person.</b></p> <p><b>a short and simple opinion about this person.</b></p>
Mind you,	
Unfortunately,	
Basically,	

- Okay, - Right, - So,	<p><b>a controversial political leader of your country now, or in the past.</b> ['Can we talk about... ']</p> <p><b>a comment about this person no one would expect.</b></p> <p><b>some extra and interesting information about this person.</b></p> <p><b>a strong opinion about this person.</b></p> <p><b>something you could predict about this person or his/her circumstances.</b></p>
- In actual fact, - In fact,	
As a matter of fact,	
As far as I'm concerned,	
Predictably,	

My answers are given in the Answer Section. Read them to discover a little about my life and opinions.

## Part Two

Part One may help you with the following 10 useful connectives and discourse markers that you could think about using. Notice that they are all short and simple, and therefore appropriate to the situation. Remember, we do not want words just to be able to say more words; we want good, natural, and appropriate pieces of language to signal meanings.

Match the discourse marker (the first column) with the correct definition (the second column), and with the correct example sentence (the third column). Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

Discourse Marker		Definition	Example Sentence	
1.	Mind you,	A. I want to say this in simpler words.	i	..., he had studied Japanese before.
2.	You see,	B. I think it is true but I may be proven wrong.	ii	..., be honest when you speak.
3.	You know,	C. This is important to say.	iii	..., I've been teaching for about 19 years now!
4.	Anyway,	D. This is something you do not know.	iv	..., my name is Andrew.
5.	Of course,	E. I want to change the subject.	v	..., I was careful not to hurt her feelings.

6.	Okay, / Right, / So,	F.	I want to conclude/ move back to the point.	vi	..., let's move on to the next subject.
7.	Basically,	G.	You might think this is untrue.	vii	..., I first taught English in Venezuela.
8.	Actually,	H.	This might surprise you.	viii	..., I just don't care about money.
9.	Honestly,	I.	This is something you already know.	ix	..., I speak English very well.
10.	Apparently,	J.	This is obvious to you.	x	..., I think I've said enough.

*Actually*, we will use Discourse Markers 6 to start the Part Two Speaking [See Tip 14, Hint 2]. *Incidentally*, the last four examples in the previous exercise are known as ‘adverbs of opinion’ or ‘attitude markers’. They add personal attitudes or judgements to what you say. They are informal and very natural to spoken English – which makes them good for the IELTS Speaking Test. We can look at 12 more of them, but remember, just ‘knowing’ an adverb does not mean you can use it well. *As far as I'm concerned*, these are all very dangerous. *Basically*, as Tip 1 said, you learn appropriate use of features such as these only with time, seeing them used in context as you study and practise more English.

### Part Three

Here is some more practice with ‘attitude markers/adverbs’. Do the same matching process. Some of these adverbs have very similar meanings, so there could be two ways to answer. Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

Adverbs		Definition		Example Sentence	
1.	Certainly	A.	You can see this for yourself // it is evident.	i	I... remember telling you about this.
2.	Clearly	B.	There is no uncertainty about this.	ii	He was... not ready to begin.
3.	Definitely	C.	You would expect this.	iii	This will... cause some problems.
4.	Evidently	D.	This is very true // No one would doubt this.	iv	..., this is going to cost a lot of money.
5.	Frankly	E.	You already know and will agree with this.	v	..., she needed money.

6.	Naturally
7.	Obviously
8.	Presumably
9.	Undoubtedly
10.	Unfortunately
11.	Incidentally
12.	Ironically

F.	The result is clear to see.
G.	There is no uncertainty about this.
H.	This may be sad, or disappointing.
I.	I think/presume this is probably true.
J.	You might think this is untrue // you might disagree.
K.	This is funny in an unexpected way.
L.	I just thought of this.

vi	..., she failed the test.
vii	..., she had had an accident of some sort.
viii	There was... a great deal of confusion.
ix	..., I always encourage my students.
x	..., that was the third time it had happened.
xi.	..., just when I got my umbrella, the rain stopped.
xii.	..., I am not very happy here in this job.

### Part Four

Put the 12 attitude adverbs in the correct gap. Again, there may be different ways to answer this. Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ , many of these adverbs have similar meaning. 2. \_\_\_\_\_ , this makes them a bit difficult to learn, and, 3. \_\_\_\_\_ , you will make many mistakes. 4. \_\_\_\_\_ , you have some IELTS study material, and there is 5. \_\_\_\_\_ *some* value in this, but 6. \_\_\_\_\_ , much of it is not good, and the worst of it is, somewhat 7. \_\_\_\_\_ , the most popular. 8. \_\_\_\_\_ , you should never believe their promises of quick answers. 9. \_\_\_\_\_ , all learning takes some time and effort, although (looking at my class), 10. \_\_\_\_\_ , some students put in more effort than others. 11. \_\_\_\_\_ , these students learn the best, so we should 12. \_\_\_\_\_ think about this.

Remember, these adverbs come with a meaning which must be appropriate to the situation. *Frankly*, you will probably use many of them wrongly. ‘Frankly’ [= ‘To be honest’ = You might think this untrue] is usually used for criticism, or *negative* opinions, since people are more likely to regard the comment as untrue – such as, ‘Frankly, your performance is not good enough’ or ‘Frankly, I hate this place’. In the IELTS Speaking Test, you may have a chance to use this...



**Examiner:** Do you like swimming?

**Speaker:** No way! Frankly, I think swimming pools are the most disgusting things around.

... but, again, to avoid the risk of over-use of these [= IELTS Fluency Band Score Five], you need to work on learning discourse markers *naturally* through normal English learning [See Tip 1].

## Part Two: Conclusions

You already know *not* to use formal ‘introductions’ and ‘conclusions’ to the simple questions in the first part of the Speaking Test, particularly if your answer is short.

However, you *could* use a conclusion if your answer is longer. In this case, the conclusion does what all conclusions do: remind the listener of the point that you made. Since your answers are actually not *so* long (compared to a formal speech), and since this is an *informal* situation, this conclusion is ‘un-announced’ and short, and ends with a falling tone of voice [See Tip 11, Hint 2].

If your answer is even longer – for example, in Part Three of the Speaking Test – and if you *ramble* a bit – that is, talk about other related issues – the conclusion can be a *little* more specific. Let us look at an example of all these, using the question, ‘**What is your favourite colour?**’

<p><b>Short Answer</b> (No concluding statement)</p>	<p>Hmmm, green – and it’s hard to say why exactly. I think perhaps because it’s the colour of nature, and I’m a keen gardener, or <i>was!</i> I used to do a lot of gardening in my own country, both on my mother’s garden and on my own.</p>
<p><b>Medium Answer</b></p>	<p>I’d go for green. It’s the colour of nature, and I’m a keen gardener, or <i>was</i> one! At one stage I actually owned a garden in my home town, and worked hard – very hard, actually – to establish it, maintain it, and improve it, and that wasn’t easy given the harsh dry summers there.</p>
<p><b>Short concluding statement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>So, anyhow, it’s green.</i></li> <li>• <i>So, definitely, green.</i></li> <li>• <i>Basically, I like green.</i></li> <li>• <i>So, yes, green.</i></li> </ul>

<p><b>Longer Answer</b></p>	<p>Favourite colour? Green, the reason being, I suppose, it's the colour of nature, and generally the colour of gardens, and I'm a keen gardener, although I don't have the opportunity now to indulge in that hobby, living as I do in an apartment in the slap-bang centre of Taipei, surrounded by cement, brick, and bitumen, and all the other unlovely pieces of city infrastructure. You know, I think right now you're making me feel a little nostalgic for my hometown, which is in, what is known as, ironically enough, 'the Garden State'.</p>
<p><b>More specific concluding statement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>So, in answer to your question, I like green.</i></li> <li>• <i>Then, to answer your question, green is my colour.</i></li> <li>• <i>Anyway, the answer is green.</i></li> <li>• <i>So yes, green would be my colour.</i></li> </ul>

Which reply is better? *All* of them are good, since all of them extend and support the answer in the way that Tip 8 will explain. Remember once again, it is not just the *number* of words you use, but the *way* you use them, which gives you a good score.

### Summing Up Tips 4, 5, and 6

You can see that honesty is the important issue here. True discourse markers, true opinion adverbs, true connectives, only work when you *honestly believe in them*. Then they become *appropriate* to the words being said. This is a point I will be repeating again and again. All the 'bad' cases in Tips 4, 5, and this tip, are forms of *dishonesty*. There is much bad IELTS 'preparation' material teaching this, but it all goes against western culture and the situation you are in, and is not the basis of good speaking. So, remember, nothing can replace being *able to speak well*. This suggests that you should just practise *speaking*.

# Tip 7

## About Words

### Preliminary

Let us go straight into an exercise.

### Exercise 20

Which one of the following speakers, A or B (or C), is better?

#### Case 1

**Speaker A:** Yeah, I was walking on the street, and by pure coincidence, I met an old friend from my past. At the back of my mind I dimly remembered him, and feeling nostalgic, I said hello.

**Speaker B:** I was ambulating on the street... and serendipitous I met a... cohort from my history. In the synapses of my mind I felt analytical... but still, in a sentimentality I said hello.

#### Case 2

**Speaker A:** Technology is quite... scary. Since computers were first... made, they have developed... a lot, quite a lot, actually.

**Speaker B:** Technology is quite... uh... What's the word?... Ah...ah... become... ah... ah... intimidating! Since computers were first... in... in... in... invented! Invented. They have developed tre... tre... tre-men. Ummm. Wait. Tremendous-ly. That's it! Developed tremendously.

#### Case 3

**Examiner:** Have you ever hurt yourself?

**Speaker A:** Yeah. I hurt my finger once, and the finger got... um... what's that word?... ahhh, you know... ah... Anyway, the doctor got out a large... ummm, ahhhhh... That thing... ahhhh... ummm. Yeah, and later he put... ahhh. Ahhh, you know...

**Speaker B:** Yeah. I hurt my finger once, and the finger got... um... bigger and more painful, because of the... problem inside. Anyway, the doctor got out a large... ummm... what is it called? Well, that thing for putting medicine inside your body... and which hurt a lot. Yeah, and later he put... ahhh... you know, those pieces of cloth which protect the injured part, around my finger.

**Speaker C:** Yeah. I hurt my finger once, and the finger got... um... bigger and more painful, because of the... problem inside. Anyway, the doctor got out a large... ummm... what is it called? That thing. It's long and thin, and on the inside there's medicine, but the medicine is not solid; it's like water, and is inside this long thin thing, but there's another part on top, and the whole thing is made of... stuff. The point is that when you press the...

#### Case 4

**Examiner:** Have you ever hurt yourself?

**Speaker:** Yeah. I hurt my finger once, and the finger got... um... what's that word?... ahhh, you know... ah... what's that word?... Umm, I know that word. What's that word?...

### Hint 1: Remember Appropriate Use

There is much bad IELTS material which gives the idea that longer and more complicated words are *always* better. This idea is made worse by the false concept of 'IELTS Vocabulary' – a magical set of words to unlock the IELTS test, and give you a high band score. All these words could equally appear in a newspaper, so these books could also be called, 'Newspaper Vocabulary', but would you buy that?

At its worst, 'IELTS vocabulary' is just a long academic word list to memorise. However, all words come with their own grammar and pronunciation, their own situations for use, and their own connection with other words. Using these so-called 'IELTS Vocabulary' books is an inefficient use of your time, and can lead you into trouble.

Learn words gradually and in context as you read, listen, and speak. Mix all the skills, and steadily become better, since what is important is not just using a range of words, but using those words *appropriately*. The IELTS band descriptors are quite clear on this. The public version gives:

Lexical resource: 1. Uses a range of words		
5	6	7
manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility	has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies	uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics

Extracted from the complete IELTS SPEAKING Band Descriptors (public version).

As we know, Vocabulary Band Scores Seven and higher begin to mention ‘idiomatic’ use of words, showing the informal nature of the speaking situation. In Exercise 20, Case 1, Speaker B has come up with ‘ambulating’, ‘serendipitously’, ‘synapses’, ‘analytical’ and ‘sentimentality’ but all these words are used inappropriately, strangely, or just wrongly, so this person’s vocabulary band score would go down to Five. Also, remember that the speaking test is informal speaking, and as we discussed in Tip 4, you do not need such formal words. This means that Speaker A is *much* better.

## Hint 2: Remember Fluency

In Case 2, Speaker B has used ‘intimidating’, ‘invented’ and ‘tremendously’, whereas Speaker A used ‘scary’, ‘made’, and ‘a lot’. Speaker B has indeed used better words, and this time used them well and appropriately to the situation. However, when trying to remember these words, both fluency and pronunciation were very much affected. The speaker stops and starts all the time. This suggests IELTS Fluency Band Score Five – ‘usually speaks, but slowly, simply, or with problems and pauses’.

Again, Speaker A does *much* better, realising when he/she does not clearly remember words, and using simpler words instead. The speaking remains fluent, pronunciation remains good, and there is nothing wrong with the words used, so the vocabulary score is not much affected. In the IELTS test, if you cannot remember a word, do not wait for too long trying to remember it. Use a simpler word instead, and this leads us to Case 3.

## Hint 3: Paraphrase

As a student of English, you will not know a great deal of words for various objects and concepts. In Case 3, neither of the speakers, A or B, knew the words, ‘to be infected’, ‘syringe’, and ‘bandages’. In these situations, we could do what Speaker A does, which is say ‘ahhh’ and ‘ummm’ all the time, again leading to the usual IELTS Fluency Band Score Five.

On the other hand, we could do what Speaker B does, and that is to *paraphrase*, which means to use other words and other phrases to explain the meanings. Speaker B explained that:

to be infected	=	to get bigger and more painful, because of the problem inside,
a syringe	=	a thing (which hurts a lot) for putting medicine inside your body,
bandages	=	pieces of cloth which protect an injured part.

By explaining these words and concepts, Speaker B managed to keep his/her speaking reasonably fluent, as well as showing a useful speaking method – a method which even native speakers of English (including myself) sometimes use. So, in Case 3, Speaker B this time is the better speaker. In fact, going back to Case 2, Speaker A was also paraphrasing, but in the simplest way – by using another word.

Once again, the IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors are quite clear on this. The public version gives:

Lexical resource: 2. Paraphrases when required		
5	6	7
attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	generally paraphrases successfully	uses paraphrase effectively

Extracted from the complete IELTS SPEAKING Band Descriptors (public version).

So, if you *can* paraphrase when you need to, you are helping to raise your Lexical Resource score towards six (or higher), *and* also your Fluency & Coherence score towards six (or higher).

So, does this mean in Exercise 20, Case 3, that Speaker C is even better? No! Remember, paraphrasing is a way to *help* you give a more *important* message – namely, the answer to the question. The paraphrasing should not ‘take over’ this purpose.

## Test

Which of the following diagrams would be Speaker A, B, and C?



Speaker A cannot paraphrase [Diagram 3], while Speaker B *can* (successfully allowing a message to be given) [Diagram 1], while Speaker C lets the paraphrasing take over the purpose of the speaking [Diagram 2]. Aim for the Diagram 1/Speaker B model.

Remember that IELTS speaking is *informal*, so your paraphrasing does not have to be particularly good. If it can give the meaning clearly enough [Lexical Resource Band Six = ‘makes meaning clear’], and if it is reasonably short and to the point, allowing your speaking to come out reasonably well [Fluency & Coherence Band Six = ‘is willing to speak at length’], then it does not matter if you... like, you know, use phrases, sort of, not so good, or use words, that aren’t, y’know, sort of exact, like, ah, *things* or *stuff*, or those sorts of words, right.

When paraphrasing, think about:

For Objects	For Concepts/Processes
1. What it looks like (and is made of).	1. The results.
2. How or why it works.	2. Why it happens.
3. When or where it is used.	3. The stages it goes through.

Thus, the *object*, a ‘syringe’, is 1. that pointy thing made of plastic 2. that puts medicine inside you, 3. which doctors use at hospitals; and the *process*, ‘for your finger to become infected’, is 1. when your finger becomes bigger 2. because of a problem inside, and 3. it slowly gets more painful.

The *object*, ‘bandages’, are 1. those white pieces of cloth 2. to protect an injury, 3. usually found in clinics and medicine boxes; and the *process*, ‘to die’, is 1. when your body stops working, 2. because it is too old or very badly injured, and 3. happens to everyone at the end of their life.

Paraphrasing is not easy, but it is a very important skill. Even native speakers of English regularly paraphrase, often for new or unusual objects which may not have a clear name. For example, a colleague of mine recently said in a meeting,

You can get the paper from... *that little circular thing* in the front area.

As an interesting contrast, my five-year-old boy did not know the word ‘battery’, and immediately said,

You need to get... that *thing inside my toys*.

Young or old, paraphrasing should be an automatic response when you have difficulties with words, and the IELTS band descriptors show this fact. This brings us to Case 4 of the previous exercise, where the speaker says:

What’s that word?

Similar questions are:

How do you say it?

How do you describe that thing?

What’s the name of... ?

These are dangerous questions to ask yourself in the IELTS Speaking Test. They *can* be used to ‘buy time’ [See Tip 17], and it is actually quite natural – a rhetorical question, that is, a question to yourself. However, if doing this, the experienced IELTS examiner will suddenly be listening *extra* carefully to see if the answers to the questions (that is, the correct words, or paraphrasings of those words), come quickly.

In Case 4 (and in Case 3, Speaker A), this answer does not come. Basically, you are then telling the IELTS examiner your Vocabulary Band Score is probably Five. Be careful, then, with these sorts of questions. Either do not use them, or, better, practise your paraphrasing.

## Exercise 21

1. Look around the room. Practise paraphrasing the names of the objects and features you see.
2. Play an English language game with a friend. Think of an object or process, and describe/paraphrase it, then see if your friend can work out the answer. Then it is your friend’s turn to paraphrase, and you can guess.
3. The following are descriptions of five words that appear in the previous section. Can you guess which words are being described?
  - A. Those places where doctors and dentists work. [Noun]
  - B. When you were born in, or really strongly belong to, a country. [Adjective]
  - C. Describing when you do something again and again. [Adverb]



- D. You know, doing it without effort, without even thinking much. [Adjective]
- E. When you have many many years practice doing something. [Adjective]

4. Look at the following pictures. Even if you *do* know the words for the pictures, do not say them. Instead, try to paraphrase the meaning using the methods in this tip. Try to do this simply and to the point, while giving clear meaning. Some answers are given in Appendix 1.

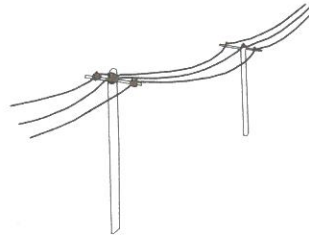
### Objects



1



2



3

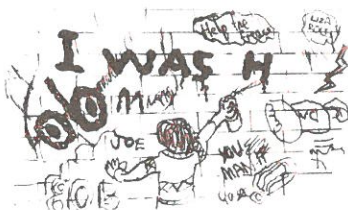


4

### Concepts/Processes



5



6



7



8

# SPEAKING PART ONE

## TIPS: 8 - 11

Okay, hopefully you have relaxed and spoken naturally and honestly (Tip 1), using our common 'speaking' grammar (Tip 2) over a range of personal topics, both in the past and in the present (Tip 3), speaking appropriately to the situation (Tip 4) and the culture (Tip 5), dealing with discourse markers (Tip 6) and difficult vocabulary (Tip 7) in an appropriate way. This will all help you in the IELTS Speaking Test generally, but let us now become specific.

Let us begin with some tips for the first part of the Speaking Test – the Interview.

## Tip 8

### Say Why, Exemplify (and Stop)

#### Exercise 22

Which one of the following speakers, A or B, *proves* themselves to be better?

##### Case 1

**Examiner:** What are your hobbies?

**Speaker A:** Swimming.

**Speaker B:** I think it's swimming, because it makes me feel good. You know, takes me away from the pressures of the modern world. When I swim at a beach in particular, I feel right back among nature.

##### Case 2

**Examiner:** What is your favourite colour?

**Speaker A:** I'm not sure.

**Speaker B:** I'm not sure, actually. As an adult now, I've long since lost interest in colours. As a male, also, I'm not that concerned about what colour clothes I wear, or what colours match my eyes, and so on.

##### Case 3

**Examiner:** What is your name?

**Speaker A:** Gao An Shu.

**Speaker B:** Huang Li Fu. Huang is my family name, and Li Fu is my given name. My mother decided on that name because it is the name of her older brother. He lives in I-Lan, and they were very close, so when I was born they named me after him. My English name is Cliff. I picked this name because it sounds like 'Li Fu', my Chinese name, and a cliff is also a piece of land which falls sharply, such as near the sea. We lived near the sea in I-Lan, so every day we saw cliffs, ... **[and so on]**.

As we discussed in Tip 1, you need to speak during the Speaking Test, and speak at *some* length.

The IELTS Band Descriptors are quite clear on this. The public version gives:

Fluency and coherence: 1. Speaks with flow and without effort		
5	6	7
usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going	is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation	speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence

Extracted from the complete IELTS SPEAKING Band Descriptors (public version).

This means, if possible, when asked simple questions (as in Part One of the Speaking Test) you need to speak to a reasonable length. Thus, in Exercise 22, Case 1, Speaker B gives the best answer.

But remember, as Tip 4, Part Two explained, do *not* try to ‘seem’ fluent by:

- speaking fast,
- answering a general *unfamiliar* question using personal *familiar* experiences (without signposting your technique),
- giving long lists of items,
- repeating the question words, ...

... and as Tip 5, Part Two explained, you should also *not*:

- give answers unrelated to the questions,
- lie,
- give memorised answers...

... and as Tip 6 explains, you should also *not* use memorised discourse markers. All these ‘techniques’ (which are given by many ‘IELTS preparation’ teachers, schools, and material) usually limit some of the Speaking Category Band Scores to IELTS Five.

One simple way to speak to some length is to think ‘Why?’, and then to give a reason, *and/or* give an example. You could put the word ‘because’ in your answer, and then, ‘For example’.

Remember, even if you do not have an answer, you *should still say why*. Thus in Case 2, Speaker B gives the much better reply. If you say, ‘I’m not sure.’ and nothing else, it *might* be honest, but the examiner will think that you do not have the speaking *ability* to properly answer the question.

Thus, you need to prove that you lack the *ideas*, but not the *ability*, to give a definite answer. Thus, use your English *ability* to explain your *lack of ideas*. Thus, in answer to the question, ‘**What is your favourite colour?**’, we could say:

I’m not sure, actually ...

Saying Why		Exemplifying
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• , because colours don’t rank very highly in my consciousness.</li> </ul>	→	Right now, my life is a bit too busy to reflect on the relative merits of one colour over another.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• , since all colours have their attractions, I suppose.</li> </ul>	→	Green’s nice, being the colour of nature, but blue is the colour of the sky, the sea, and the colour of my eyes, incidentally.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• , the reason being that I’ve got more important things happening in my life now than caring about colours.</li> </ul>	→	I’m busy at work; I’m raising a young boy; I’m settling into life in a foreign country, a new job, and I’m trying to learn Chinese. I just don’t think about colours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• , as it’s something I don’t care much about anymore.</li> </ul>	→	I mean, when I need to relax, I sometimes go to a park, but I don’t think it’s particularly for the green colour there.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• . I guess I once had a favourite colour as a kid, but those times are long past.</li> </ul>	→	I think I chose green at the time. My older brother chose blue, but there was no real reason for it then, or now, so I don’t have a favourite colour.

The examples that you give could be of three types:

**1. Impersonal and general**

[When *people* go on holidays, they often prefer to go to natural areas where there is lots of green. ...]

**2. Personal and general**

[When I have a break, I love to sit under a tree, drinking tea. ...]

**3. Personal and specific**


[I remember one time when I went to the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. ...]

The first two are in *Present Simple* tense, since they are generally true, while the third one is in *Past Simple* tense, since it is a specific past event. You should always think about not repeating the ‘because/for example’ model too much. So, the answer to ‘**What is your favourite colour?**’ could be:

Probably green...		
	Introducing the...	reason.
1	because...	green is the colour of nature. You know, the colour of trees and bushes and grass...
2	and (I think) this is because...	
3	the reason being that...	
4	. The reason for this is...	
5	, like, ... [as a preposition]	
6	. You see, ...	
7	. Why? Well, ...	
8	[Say nothing – just go straight into the reason]	

Introducing the...	example.
For example, ...	when people go on holiday...
For instance, ...	when I have a break, I...
You only have to take a look at...	just how popular parks are. ...
A good example of this is...	when I went to the Botanic gardens...
You can see this...	when you walk in the park. ...
What I mean is	when you look at a tree, you...
I mean...	everybody likes parks and...
, like, ... [as a preposition]	almost everything is green in nature...
<b>[Say nothing – just go straight into the example]</b>	When you walk in the park, ...

Answer 7 uses a rhetorical question, asked with a rising tone (  ), which shows that *you* intend to answer your *own* question. [Also see Tips 16 and 17]. The last one – saying nothing – is very natural, and you should use this sometimes. Just give the reason(s) and example(s) directly. The following Cases 4 and 5 show this ‘straight to the point’ approach.

So, the question, ‘**Do you prefer cats or dogs?**’ should not produce the short answer ‘Cats’, but one such as:

**Case 4**

<b>Answer</b>	I definitely prefer cats.
<b>Say why</b>	They’re quieter, softer, cleaner and basically, they remind me of the wilds of Africa.

<b>Exemplify</b>	[Smiling] You see, when cats are walking, I'm always impressed at their elegance* and grace, and when I see their faces, I can see the tiger or lion still inside them. Dogs have been bred to look and act like clowns, but cats have kept that dignity* and wildness, that whiff* of Africa. That's what I love about them.
<b>Think About Stopping</b>	

... or, mixing it up a little, ...

<b>Answer</b>	I definitely prefer cats.
<b>Exemplify</b>	I grew up with cats in my home town, and the cats were Penny and Jojo, and, y'know, they both have different personalities. One was lazy, although I guess both were lazy, since most of the time all they seemed to do was sleep, as cats do, but one was a <i>real</i> killer, regularly coming in with dead birds, and one time coming in with an <i>enormous</i> rat.
<b>Say why</b>	You see, cats just relax me so much. [Smiling] I love their attitude and outlook on life. When I see a cat in a room, it seems to be saying to me, 'You take life too seriously; take a chill-pill man, and, like, lay back a little.'
<b>Think About Stopping</b>	

... or, mixing it up again, ...

<b>Say why</b>	Well, cats are low-maintenance, certainly not needing all the time and attention that dogs demand. Cats basically just leave you in peace...
<b>Answer</b>	... so I prefer the humble* pussycat.
<b>Exemplify</b>	Having said that, they don't always leave you in peace, especially when they are kittens. [Smiling] Actually, I remember when I was doing my high school certificate (or HSC, as they called it in those days), trying to study and having little Jojo, who was just a kitten then, constantly meowing and jumping up onto my desk, demanding a share of my time, and most annoying it was at that.
<b>Think About Stopping</b>	

... or, mixing it up again, ...

<b>Answer</b>	Ah, I'll probably go for cats.
<b>Exemplify</b>	I grew up with cats, and they basically become members of your family. I even cried once when we had to put down* Put Put, a cat we had for some 14 years. [Smiling] It was just <i>cats, cats, cats</i> , all the time, and right now my mother still has Penny and Jojo, and let me tell you, those two felines must <i>really</i> be getting on in age.
<b>Think About Stopping</b>	

**Note**

With every sample speaking answer, or part of an answer, difficult words in the text are ‘asterisked’ – that is, marked with a \*. Definitions to these words are given at the end as a matching exercise, titled ‘Word Learning Time’. Do these exercises, and study and remember the words, as this is an ongoing and very important part in developing your English skills.

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>elegance</b>	(adj)	a slight sign or feeling of sth. (usually a smell)
2	<b>dignity</b>	(n)	attractiveness and style, showing good design
3	<b>whiff</b>	(n)	a sense of your own importance
4	<b>humble</b>	(adj)	to kill an animal, usu. with a drug, because it is old or sick
5	to put down	(v)	showing you do not think you are as important as others

Some questions mean that you go straight to ‘Say Why’.

- Why do people like sweet food?
- Why are you studying English?

Some questions might mean that you can go straight to ‘Exemplify’.

- Can you explain about your job?
- What did you do (when you were last caught in traffic)?

There are no ‘rules’ about informal speaking, and you can take any of the following four paths you want:

- Answer – Say Why – Exemplify,
- Answer – Exemplify – Say Why,
- Say Why – Answer – Exemplify,
- Answer – Exemplify.

The path can depend on the question, and also, as the next two tips will show, there are other ways to answer, but *exemplification from your own life* is always good because it leads towards *honest* speaking, and so allows more natural pronunciation, and natural use of discourse markers and connectives. You may have realised that the previous ‘cat’ answers are ‘real’, and I *was* indeed smiling while I gave them.



When giving reasons, you are actually answering the question ‘why’. To help continue talking, you could think of and answer the other question words in English.

- When
- Who (with)
- How often
- Where
- What
- How long

This is usually with *Present Simple* tense, and is called ‘elaboration’, which is just a more general form of exemplification. So, the question, ‘**Do you talk much to your neighbours?**’ should not produce the short answer ‘Almost never’, but something such as:

### Case 5

<b>Answer</b>		Almost never actually.
<b>Say why</b>		My life is generally too busy and too fast for that.
<b>Explain/ Elaborate  (generally)</b>	Starting	I get up, go to work, and come straight home to a variety of chores*, and total household mayhem* and bedlam*.
	What?	You know, I do the sweeping and mopping every night, hanging up the clothes and dealing with the washing ...
	Who?	... and then spend time with my little boy, who needs some English input if he’s to learn the language.
	How often?	I do that everyday, and I often work full weekends as well, so the routine is repeated then.
	Finishing	So when do you get time to talk to neighbours, who are probably just as busy as I am, if not more?

### Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	chore	(n)	a scene full of noise and confusion
2	<b>mayhem</b>	(n)	a task that you do regularly, esp. an unpleasant one
3	<b>bedlam</b>	(n)	confusion and/or fear esp. caused by a sudden event

So, does this mean in Exercise 22, Case 3, Speaker B again gives the best answer? No! Simple questions need simple answers. In Part One of the speaking test, the questions are reasonably simple. Answer, extend your answer through your reasons, examples, and elaboration, and then...

## ... think about stopping.

In Case 3, the question was just to confirm the name. Tip 1 tells us that the basis of good speaking is honesty, relaxation, and naturalness. At the end of Tip 6 we again said that you should be honest by not using memorised passages and acting in the way that you behave or speak. In Case 3, Speaker B is following some *bad* advice. In Part Three of the Speaking Test, you will be able to ‘ramble’ and ‘drift’ at some length, but always remember that...



Talking for a long time without stopping is *not* what good speakers do. Good speakers will speak for *some* time and then stop when they have sufficiently answered the question. Notice in Case 5, the speaker did this well, concluding or ‘winding up’ his answers with a natural ‘rhetorical question’ – all signs of a good speaker.

Compare this ‘good’ example to the ‘bad’ examples in Tip 6, Exercise 18. As we said then, do not use formal introductions and conclusions for these simple answers. If you do that, you are over-using ‘discourse markers’ and your score may be lowered.

A more common way to finish or ‘cue an end’ is by:

1. using *tone* and *stress* – that is, using features of pronunciation.
2. simply saying that you have finished.

We will look at this in more detail in Tips 11, 15 (Part Three), 16, and 19 (Point E). You can practise with the following exercise.

### Exercise 23

Practise the ‘Answer, say why, exemplify’ technique with the following typical Speaking Part One questions.

1. What is your favourite colour?
2. Which do you prefer: cats or dogs?
3. What are your hobbies?

4. What job would you like in the future?
5. Have you ever travelled abroad?
6. What do you think is the biggest problem with computers?
7. What do you usually do on the weekends?
8. How often do you talk to your neighbours?
9. When do you prefer to study?
10. Do you often eat out?
11. Have you ever lost a tooth?
12. Can you play any musical instruments?
13. Is there much pressure in your life?
14. Do you believe in ghosts?
15. When did you last learn a new skill?
16. Do you celebrate Christmas?
17. How often do you do cleaning in your home?
18. What insects do you sometimes find in your home?
19. Do you plan to have children?
20. When did you last fill in a form?

# Tip 9

## Divide into Sides

This is a natural continuation of the previous tip.

### Exercise 24

Think about the following four exchanges.

1. What is the pattern or structure behind the answers?
2. How are the questions similar?

#### Case 1

**Examiner:** Do you like pets?

**Speaker:** Umm, I guess... there are both good and bad things about them. On the good side, they can be nice friends, good companions\*, and so on; but on the other side, I'm sure there's a cost involved in having them. ...

#### Case 2

**Examiner:** Do you prefer eating in restaurants?

**Speaker:** Well, I suppose... yes, I like eating in *good* restaurants, but they have to be good ones, where the food and environment is high quality. It must be admitted that there are certain points about restaurants that I'm not enamored\* with. I suspect many of them have pretty filthy kitchens actually, and you've also got to also wonder about the freshness of the food and ingredients. ...

#### Case 3

**Examiner:** What do you think of mobile phones?

**Speaker:** On the whole I don't like them, although clearly they can be convenient and time saving, and useful on occasions, like when you're on the road and need to be contacted. Other times I find them just a pain in the posterior,\* especially when they constantly interrupt my class. ...

## Case 4

**Examiner:** Are you happy with your present lifestyle?

**Speaker:** It's hard to say. Yes and no. I have a wonderful little boy, and it's great to have him, and I'm basically healthy. The trouble is, I have too much work and not enough money, and consequently the obligation\* to keep working all the time, and, equally, a lot of pressure. ...

### Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	companion	(n)	liking something very much
2	enamoured	(adj)	the state of being forced to do sth. because it is your duty
3	posterior	(n)	a person or animals that spends a lot of time with you
4	obligation	(n)	[humorous] the part of your body that you sit on

Remember, in the first part of the Speaking Test you are asked many personal questions about many topics, and what could be more personal than what you *like*, *prefer*, *think of*, and *are happy with* – in other words, about your likes and dislikes?

When asked about likes and dislikes, you can organise your thinking to produce a clearer and more fluent answer by a 'divide into sides' strategy, and talk about the...

1. things you like about it and also the things you dislike about it,
2. ways you like it, but also the ways in which you don't,
3. optimistic view or the pessimistic view,
4. advantages and disadvantages,
5. good things and bad things,
6. positives and negatives,
7. nice and not so nice,
8. take it and leave it,
9. ups and downs,
10. pros and cons,

... but remember *to be honest*. Do not be *dishonest*, 'wishy washy', and indecisive. This can be

unnatural and inappropriate, and thus *lower* your score. A simple question such as:

Do you like chocolate?

... usually needs a simple answer, such as:

Sure. I *love* chocolate. I eat it all the time.

... and then [Tip 8], ...

Often I buy a small block at a convenience store in order to cheer myself up. I've even bought a bar of chocolate for one of my students when I felt she was feeling low...

However, this could then be followed by [this tip] ...

... although chocolate has its negatives of course – one of them being what it does to your waistline: about a zillion empty calories to ruin the best-laid diet plans ...

Then [Tip 8, again] ...

I think chocolate was primarily responsible for my older brother blowing up into Elvis-like proportions. ...

So, you can either:

1. Take a 'middle' position, ...
  - I'm not sure. ...
  - It's hard to say. ...
  - It depends, really. ...
  - I don't really know. ...
  - Uh, I can't really say. ...
  - [Tip 4, Part Three: Body language! Shrug your shoulders/raise your palms, purse your lips]

... if you are *honestly* not sure, then discuss the two sides, ... or...

2. Take a side, ...
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes. ...</li> <li>• Sure. ...</li> <li>• I agree. ...</li> <li>• You bet. ...</li> <li>• Absolutely. ...</li> <li>• I think I agree. ...</li> <li>• Yes, I think so. ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. ...</li> <li>• No way. ...</li> <li>• Not really. ...</li> <li>• I'd say no. ...</li> <li>• Probably not. ...</li> <li>• I'm afraid not. ...</li> <li>• I don't think so. ...</li> </ul>
--	---

[and say why, exemplify], but then discuss the 'other side' by continuing:

- but...
- although...
- Of *course*, ...
- Admittedly, ...
- The trouble *is*... [usually for a *negative*] [Subject + Verb]...
- Having said that, ...
- On the other hand, ...
- I must *admit* (though) that...
- One good point, though, *is*... [for a *positive*]

Incidentally, I use ‘Having said that’, a great deal in general speaking, and it was also used in Tip 8, Case 4, in the third example.

So, let me show this once again, firstly, with a positive answer, and then with a negative one.

### Case 5

**Examiner:** Do you like television?

**Speaker:** Yes. Sure I do – that is, the programs that I like, such as ‘The Simpsons’, or some documentaries, and the occasional movie. I think everyone likes the opportunity to sit down and be entertained by something as visual and well-put-together as television programs. *Having said that*, I’m always annoyed by commercials – so annoyed in fact that I always mute the sound when they come up. It’s *particularly* annoying when the volume of the commercials is louder than that of the program itself.

**Examiner:** What’s your opinion of nightclubs?

**Speaker:** To be honest, I hate the stinking places. They’re awful, smoky, hot, humid holes, with blasting music rendering all conversation impossible, and I long ago decided that only stupid people go there! *The trouble is*, if you’re shy and bored and don’t know how to meet people, then sometimes a nightclub is the *only* place to go to. I actually dragged myself unwillingly to certain nightclubs on occasion, when I was younger.

And now, having answered the question, and extended my answer nicely, I will *stop*.

### Exercise 25

Now answer the following Speaking Part One questions. If it is natural, try the ‘Divide into

Sides' technique. Try to vary your phrasing.

- |                            |                               |                             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Do you like...             | 1. western food?              | 2. your studies/job?        |
|                            | 3. your own culture?          | 4. traveling by plane?      |
| Do you prefer...           | 5. cats to dogs?              | 6. working indoors?         |
|                            | 7. going abroad for holidays? | 8. emailing to phone calls? |
| What do you think of...    | 9. the public transport here? | 10. coffee?                 |
|                            | 11. television ads?           | 12. Christmas?              |
| Are you happy with your... | 13. present life?             | 14. career choice?          |
|                            | 15. family relationships?     | 16. physical appearance?    |
| What's your opinion of...  | 17. life in your hometown?    | 18. your political leaders? |
|                            | 19. euthanasia?               | 20. capital punishment?     |



# Tip 10

## Divide and Ride

This is a variation of the previous tip. Yes, you can ‘divide’ into good and bad, but there are other ways to divide also.

### Exercise 26

Think about the following three exchanges. What point am I trying to make?

#### Case 1

**Examiner:** What sort of pets do people prefer in this country?

**Speaker:** Umm, I guess... they prefer cats. Cats are cleaner and quieter and most people live in apartments, so cats are more suitable to that sort of life.

[Examiner’s Thoughts: But I see dogs everywhere here.]

#### Case 2

**Examiner:** Do people grow trees or flowers?

**Speaker:** Well, I guess... they grow flowers because they don’t have gardens in which to plant large things. For example, they use flower pots, and grow small plants.

[Examiner’s Thoughts: But trees are all over my wife’s hometown.]

#### Case 3

**Examiner:** Do people go to swimming pools in this country?

**Speaker:** Not really. People are too busy, and pools can be very expensive, so generally people are not interested in those sorts of activities.

[Examiner’s Thoughts: But I know many people who go to swimming pools.]

The speaker is giving good and honest answers, but life is not as simple as many IELTS questions suggest, particularly when the subject of the question moves from the personal [you] to the *impersonal* [people, society, students, home-owners, your country, and other third person

nouns]. Some people prefer cats; some prefer dogs. In the city they grow flowers; in the country they grow trees. Some people do not go to swimming pools; other people do. Often you cannot be sure and it is not possible to ‘generalise’.

In the first part of the Speaking Test, you are sometimes asked oversimplified questions. This is why this tip is in the Speaking Part One section – because you will first face these sorts of questions there. However, in the *third* part of the test, when the speaking becomes more *impersonal*, you are *often* asked these simple sorts of questions. If they are very oversimplified, you could:

1. state that it is an over-simplification. For example, by saying:

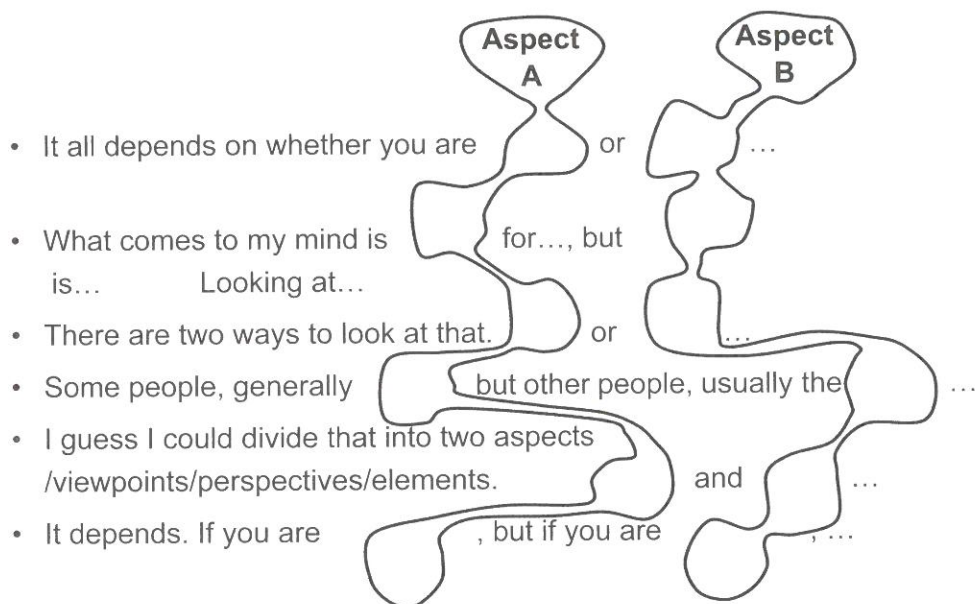
- I think that that question over-simplifies a complex issue.
- It’s impossible to give a straightforward answer to that.
- Can anyone really know the answer to that question?
- Now that’s a difficult one to simply answer.
- It’s not easy to generalise on that matter.
- Oh, it’s not as simple as that, actually.
- That’s a tough question, you know.
- There’s no simple answer to that.
- Ha, I wish life were that clear.
- Hmm. A difficult question.
- Actually, it’s hard to say.
- Who knows?

2. ... and/or then divide the question into two aspects. For example, you could think about:

- |                      |                  |                             |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| • you / other people | • city / country | • traditional / modern      |
| • men / women        | • north / south  | • expert / non-expert       |
| • rich / poor        | • east / west    | • educated / non-educated   |
| • young / old        | • fit / unfit    | • ambitious / non-ambitious |

... and other [A]/[B] combinations.

To divide, you could use organising signposts such as:



The first part is actually an example of ‘buying time’ by ‘evaluating the question’ or expressing ‘natural reactions’, and we will look more deeply at this in Tip 17. If the question is a ‘mild’ simplification, then you can just use the second part straight away. So, if the question is:

Do you think most people just want money?

the following answer, combining this Tip 10, and Tip 8, is possible:

<b>Stating the Simplification</b>	Oh, I'd say it's not as simple as that, actually.
<b>Dividing</b>	I think there are two schools of thought on that issue. One is that, yes, most people <i>do</i> , but the other argument is that most people want happiness and love.
<b>Discussing one side</b>	Money, for example, is seen just as a <i>means</i> to achieving that happiness.
<b>Exemplifying that side (Personal)</b>	As for myself, I'd say I <i>definitely</i> want money. I have a loan from the bank, and a young child to raise – and it's hard to feel happy under <i>those</i> circumstances.
<b>Exemplifying the other side (General)</b>	But then, you certainly <i>do</i> hear stories of very rich people who live very unhappy lives, and die unloved and unfulfilled.
<b>Further Exemplification</b>	I've read accounts of people who win lots of money in lotteries, but then the money, and the responsibility of handling that money, overwhelms them, and then their lives go astray.

<b>Winding Down</b>	Still, speaking for myself <b>[Smiling]</b> , winning heaps of money is a <i>misfortune</i> that I'd <i>gladly</i> endure.
---------------------	--

In this answer, notice the stress on 'do' (two times), 'means' and 'definitely'. This is stress for clarification [Tip 3, Hint 2], to make the meaning clearer, and the IELTS pronunciation descriptors reward such 'pronunciation features'. Notice also the last sentence – 'winding down' – and with a stress on the second last word. Tip 11 will look more at this.

If the examiner asks a *personal* question which you think is over-simplifying (for example, in the first part of the Speaking Test), the division is based on your personal experience and preferences. Two good ways to introduce the division are:

- It depends.
- It depends on **[Noun]**.

So, if the examiner asks, '**Do you like pets?**', you could answer:

<b>It depends on:</b>	1. the pet.	I like cats because... I don't like dogs because...
	2. where I'm living.	In my country, definitely, because I had a garden... But in Taiwan, I wouldn't like a pet because...
	3. my accommodation.	If I have good furniture, I don't like pets because... but if I have old furniture, then...
	4. my family status.	Now, as a married man with a child, I'm afraid... If I was single once again, then I think...
	5. my stage of life.	At this moment, no, because I'm just too busy... Maybe if I was retired, I could think about...
	6. my financial status.	If I had more money, then sure, I'd... But right now, every cent is needed for...

Remember, once again, you need to be honest, and follow this tip only if the question *does* over-simplify, or there *is* a natural division that comes to your mind.

**Exercise 27**

**Part One: Personal Questions**

'Divide' the following speaking topics into two aspects with respect to your *personal* preferences? Then talk about these aspects, using the appropriate question cue to begin.

**Speaking Topics**

**Questions**

Do you like...

Are you happy with...

What's your opinion of...

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. alcohol        | 6. the food that you eat       |
| 2. city life      | 7. your university system      |
| 3. summer         | 8. the modern way of life      |
| 4. computers      | 9. the clothes that you wear   |
| 5. computer games | 10. the weather where you live |



**Answer**

It depends on... // It depends. ...

**Part Two: Impersonal Questions**

You could quite naturally 'divide into sides' for many of the speaking topics in the following exercise; however, think about how you could 'divide' them into two aspects with respect to other people and/or your country? Then talk about these aspects, using the appropriate question cue to begin.

**Speaking Topics**

**Questions**

Do people like...

Is/Are [...] a good idea

Is/Are [...] popular/common in your country

- |                   |                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. fast-food      | 9. outdoor activities             |
| 2. dancing        | 10. working for western companies |
| 3. skiing         | 11. your educational system       |
| 4. mobile phones  | 12. going to nightclubs           |
| 5. computer games | 13. doing lots of homework        |
| 6. swimming       | 14. cooking at home               |
| 7. shopping       | 15. going to libraries            |
| 8. factories      | 16. animals in the home           |



**Answer**

It depends on... // It depends. ...

**Part Three: Freer Practice**

Now answer the following Speaking Part One and Part Three questions. If it is natural, try the

‘Divide and Ride’ or ‘Divide into Sides’ techniques. Try to vary your phrasing.

1. What subjects do young people usually take in secondary school?
2. Do people often travel abroad?
3. Is skiing popular among people here?
4. Which is better: working for a western company or a local one?
5. Do you sometimes think mobile phones are annoying?
  
6. Do many people here eat fast-food?
7. Do you think cooking at home is popular?
8. Are there many factories in your country?
9. In this country, do people do outdoor activities?
10. Why do children like computer games so much?
  
11. What do people usually eat for breakfast in your culture?
12. Do you think children need strict discipline?
13. What sort of dancing do people do in your country?
14. What facilities should a good library have?
15. When is the best time to start a family/have children?

Some possible answers to Parts One and Two of this exercise are given in the Answer Section, and possible answers to Part Three are given in Appendix 2.

## Note on Tips 8 to 10

Let us consider the last three tips: ‘Answer, Say Why, Exemplify’, ‘Divide into Sides’, and ‘Divide and Ride’. It is important to realise that you should not just use *one* of them alone. They all ‘overlap’, and they naturally fit together in any honest natural answer. If the question is ‘**Do you like pets?**’, an answer could be:

Speaking	Notes
It's not a straightforward question actually.	Mentioning the oversimplification
I can <i>honestly</i> see both good points and bad points.	Dividing into sides
On the good side,	Giving one side

pets can be nice companions, and you can choose your pet to provide the sort of companion you want.

A cat's a quiet companion, a dog's a loyal one, a fish is low maintenance\*, and so on and so forth.

On the *bad* side, though,

all pets require food, medical care, cleaning, grooming\*, and other expenses.

I remember our cats back home, and having to pay for the flea control ointment\* – really expensive stuff, something like \$35 at the RSPCA, and that's definitely not chicken feed\*.

Pets come with issues, as well.

Our cats, for example, scratched up our sofas really badly, and I mean *really* badly, although we accepted it at the time because the sofas were old as the hills.

I'll continue on this theme, if you want?

Speaking about pets specifically (rather than generally),

I have an ambivalent\* attitude towards dogs. I mean, I like dogs.

They're loyal, *very* loyal, and stick to your side all the time, and will even protect you, and because of their territorial instinct, are great burglar\* alarms.

Having said that,

dog droppings are a big problem, and, to my mind, a pretty disgusting one at that.

The little public park on Ning-An Street where I sometimes go is often littered\* with dog droppings, often squashed\* underfoot – and that usually provokes in me an extreme animosity\* towards those stupid mutts\*, no matter how cute and loyal they may be. Basically, they're just a menace\* to public hygiene\*, and I don't think the public at large should put up with them.

Saying why

Exemplifying

Giving the other side

Saying why

Exemplifying,  
personally

Giving the other side,  
continuing

Exemplifying

Bridging

Pausing

Answering

Dividing and riding

Saying why

Dividing into sides

Giving the other side

Exemplifying

## Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>maintenance</b>	(n)	a smooth substance that is rubbed on the skin to make it better
2	<b>grooming</b>	(n)	the act of keeping sth. in good condition
3	<b>ointment</b>	(n)	to press sth. so that it becomes soft, flat, or changes shape
4	chicken feed	(n)	(inf.) a dog, especially not a particularly breed
5	<b>ambivalent</b>	(adj)	a thief who robs houses or apartments
6	<b>burglar</b>	(n)	a strong feeling of opposition, anger, or hatred
7	<b>to litter</b>	(v)	(fig.) a small amount of money
8	<b>to squash</b>	(v)	the actions to keep clothes, hair, or fur (on animals) clean/neat
9	<b>animosity</b>	(n)	a threat or danger
10	mutt	(n)	having/showing both good and bad feelings about sb./sth.
11	<b>menace</b>	(n)	the concept of cleanliness and keeping or being clean
12	<b>hygiene</b>	(n)	to leave things, esp. rubbish, in a place, making it look untidy

So, we could divide into sides [‘In some ways yes, and in some ways no’], divide and ride [‘It depends on the pet’], and answer, say why, and exemplify [‘For example’] while we speak. We could answer [‘I don’t like dogs...’], but not say why, just immediately exemplify [‘Take a look at a public park and see the droppings; it’s disgusting...’] We may ‘divide and ride’ [‘It depends on the pet...’], and then immediately ‘divide’ again ‘into sides’ [‘Dogs, for example, have pros and cons...’]. As Tip 1 says, it is this honest approach, with natural connectives and discourse markers, which makes good speaking. This means, after practising Exercise 27, Parts One, Two, and Three, you should continue to practise, aiming towards a more natural and less rehearsed model. And this is a skill which takes time.



# Tip 11

## Cue Through, Wind Down, Cue Due

As we know, it is not just speaking which is judged, but also ‘discourse features’, and your ability to add to the smoothness of the conversation.

### Hint 1: Cue Through

We already know that the IELTS Speaking Test is just a series of topics – three of them in Part One, and another one in Part Two. That is four distinct topic groups, and logically, the examiner must introduce, or connect to, or bridge, or ‘segue’ [/segwei/] into each one with language such as:

#### Bridge...

- Now, let’s talk about flowers.
- Could we now discuss computers?
- I’d like to talk about the weather.
- Now I’ll give you a topic to talk about.

#### to ...Questions

- Do you like flowers?
- Do you own a computer?
- What is your favourite weather?
- Okay? You can start talking now.

What do you do when this happens? Nothing, right? What could you do? Think about it. Are you not part of the conversation? What would a native speaker do? He would do what is called ‘back channeling’, but which I will call ‘cueing through’.

**Examiner**

**[Bridge]:** Now, let's talk about flowers.

**[Question]:** Do you like flowers?

**You**

Cue Through (Short)	Comment Cue Through	Longer Comment Cue Through
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Okay.</li> <li>• Sure.</li> <li>• Fine (with me).</li> <li>• Go ahead.</li> <li>• Sounds good.</li> <li>• Of course.</li> <li>• By all means.</li> <li>• Why not.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A/An good</li> <li>• nice</li> <li>• cute</li> <li>• odd</li> </ul> <p>topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can do that.</li> <li>• Right, I'm happy with that.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That sounds good to me.</li> <li>• I actually like that subject.</li> <li>• Okay, I can handle that.</li> <li>• Ah, I don't like that, actually, but go ahead.</li> <li>• I don't know much about that, actually, but I'll try.</li> </ul>
<p>Body Language Cue Through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Nod your head]</li> <li>• ['Handing over' gesture with the hand]</li> <li>• [A smile]</li> </ul>		<p>[Whatever honest natural reaction comes into your mind.]</p>

The important point, as always, is to be honest. An example of a *candidate* using a bridge is in the previous 'Note on Tips 8 to 10'. In the example answer, the candidate's answer is long, and after the first half, the candidate 'bridges' or 'segues' into the second.

**Hint 2: Cue Due**

Continuing with the Speaking Part One tips, here is another simple and very important one.

**Exercise 28**

What is wrong with the speaker's answers in the following examples? The line ( ' — ' ) shows a rising tone of voice (as, for example, in the question, 'Are you happy?')

## Case 1

**Examiner:** What is your favourite colour?

**Speaker:** I think it's green, because green is the colour of nature. It's the colour of trees and bushes and grass. Like, just see how many green things there are when you walk in the park. Trees are nice, actually. Ummm. Trees have many leaves and support animals, ... so I think we should always plant trees. Cities should have trees, too. ...Uhhh, and look after animals, ... and people shouldn't thrown rubbish in the parks. Uhh..... Uhhh... People also throw cigarettes on the ground, ... so smoking should be banned as well. I believe smoking should definitely be banned. ...

## Case 2

**Examiner:** What is your favourite colour?

**Speaker:** I think it's green, because green is the colour of nature. You know, the colour of trees and bushes and grass. For example, when you walk in the park, most of what you see is green... ummm...

**Examiner:** ... [waits] ...

**Speaker:** Ahhh, and all the thing are green. ... you know... yeah...

**Examiner:** ... [waits] ...

**Speaker:** And other things have green. ... you know... ahhh...

**Examiner:** ... [waits] ...

## Point 1

In Case 1, the speaker is following some bad advice – the advice that tells you to talk and talk and talk. This can lead to ‘drifting’ – that is, talking without aim or focus or purpose, and this leads to *disfluency* and problems. In Part One of the Speaking Test, when you are asked fairly simple questions, talk a while, say why, exemplify or divide as appropriate, and then *stop!* The question is answered, and you have showed that you can speak at length, and the examiner has many more questions, so, as Tip 8 says, ...

... think about stopping.

You *could* keep speaking, and better speakers might do this, but only if:

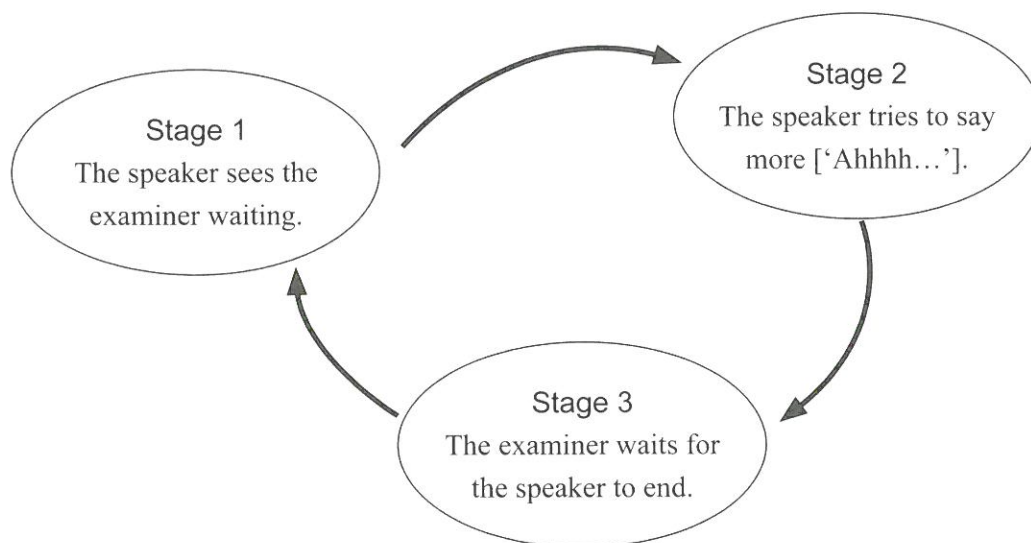
1. you have something to say,
2. it is connected to the topic.

Otherwise, as in Case 1, you can ‘drift’ away into a lower IELTS score. Remember, once again, good speaking is not about how *long* you can speak, but about how *well* you can speak.

## Point 2

In Case 2, the speaker has run out of thoughts, and does not know what more to say. Perhaps the speaker wants to stop, but if speakers *do not cue* an end to their thoughts, examiners must wait because they do not know whether the speakers have finished or not.

Again, there is much bad advice about talking all the time, and this can lead to the following situation.



The result is the speaker searching for anything to say, and saying it weakly in little bits and pieces, and with *disfluency*, all lowering the score. The problem is the *examiner must follow the script*. The examiner *cannot* ask ‘Is that it?’ or ‘Are you finished?’ or ‘Okay?’ or any other natural conversational cue. If you *do not show* that you have finished, the examiner must wait. A ‘cue’ is ‘due’, but the examiner cannot say it.

This tip – Tip 11 – is simple and *very* important, and there are two parts.

1. a. Do not talk endlessly – especially when you have nothing left to say.  
 b. If you have talked for a long time, and you want to (and *can*) continue, then cue a ‘continuation’.
2. Cue when you have finished, allowing you to overcome the unnaturalness of the conversation.

Let us look at these more closely.

### Cueing a Continuation

These are natural discourse markers, and together with body language and a ‘rising’ tone, form a yes/no question.

- Do you want to hear about a personal example?
- I can pursue this topic further if you want.
- I can keep talking about this if you want.
- Do you want me to keep talking?
- Shall I keep talking on this topic?
- Shall I continue?

### Cueing a Finish

Let us consider ‘cueing’ a finish. When giving simple answers, we usually cue a finish using four features at the same time:

1. a short *falling* tone of voice at the end,
2. a slight stress or emphasis on the final word,
3. an ‘expectant’ silence, and...
4. body language [such as your facial expression or hand movements].

A real-life example might be:

I want three coffees, two eggs, and a slice of toast. [Stop]

The falling tone and the slight stress on the word ‘toast’ show the end of the speaking. Thus, the correct response to the examiner’s question, ‘What is your favourite colour?’ is something such as:

**Speaker:** I think it’s green, because green is the colour of nature. You know, the colour of trees and bushes and grass. It’s like when you walk in the park. Almost everything you see is green.

... [Brief silence] ...

**Examiner:** Are any colours used in festivals in your country?

If the examiner *keeps* waiting silently, then you can simply say that you have finished. You could nod your head, and/or shrug your shoulders [Tip 4, Part Three], and/or say:

- I think that's it.
- Yeah.
- Okay?

The rising tone in the last response shows that it is a question, asking whether the examiner is 'okay' or satisfied with the answer. You could even give responses such as:

- What's the next question?
- I'm sure you have another questions.
- So, what's next?

The word 'then' is sometimes used for this same purpose – to close the answer.

- Okay then?
- So, that's it then.

With the speaker cueing an end by the tone of voice, and/or by saying so, the examiner can smoothly ask the next question, and the test continues, but this time the examiner would feel that the speaker is better – in fact, *much* better.



# SPEAKING PART TWO

## TIPS: 12 - 16

We now move to the second part of the IELTS Speaking test – the Individual Long Turn. Here, you are given an A4-sized booklet, with each page having a speaking task, such as:

Talk about a trip you have had.

You should talk about:

- where you went
- why you went there
- what happened during the trip and how the trip finally ended.

You are then given a pencil and piece of paper, and allowed one minute to think and take notes. You are then asked to speak for up to two minutes. Remember, you are asked to talk about a specific subject, not a general one. The next five tips will look at this part of the test.



# Tip 12

## The Long Turn: Thinking

### Hint 1: Think More

So, you have one minute to think and take notes. Look at the following exercise.

### Exercise 29

Which speaker is ‘thinking’ in the best way?

**Speaker A’s Thoughts:** A trip? Hualien! [*begins writing notes*]

**Speaker B’s Thoughts:** A trip? Ummmm. Hualien, or maybe Las Vegas? Which was more fun, more interesting? Which one had some really interesting things? Las Vegas was amazing actually. Really different. Hualien was okay, but only a day. I’ll choose Las Vegas!  
[*begins writing notes*]

Everyone ‘thinks’ and does note-taking in different ways, but most students *immediately* begin writing notes as fast as they can (as Speaker A does). Students obviously want to use the full minute for note-taking. Perhaps someone, or some book, has advised this. I do *not* advise this. I advise that you do what Speaker B does – that is, wait and *think*, and think a *great deal* before making any notes.

You will talk better about a subject that...

1. has more ‘content’ or interesting aspects,
2. you remember better,
3. you *want* to talk about

This means you should think carefully about your *choices*. Whatever the Long Turn subject is – pets, trips, best friends, pictures, memories, or favourite books – you will probably have some choices – one or two pets, trips, best friends, pictures, memories, or books. In the minute of

thinking/note-taking, you should spend *some* time thinking about which choice has the most of the previous 1, 2, and 3 elements.

For example, if I had to talk about a...

**pet or animal that I know,**

... I would not talk about the dog next door; I would talk about our family cat in my country, but which one: Mitzi, Put-Put, Bluey, Jo-Jo, or Penny? Actually, I would talk about 'Bluey', because I can easily remember how annoying he was as a baby (that is, a *kitten*), when I needed to study for my final year of highschool, so that sounds more interesting.

Other interesting facts about this also come to mind: stories and *anecdotes*, especially the way we had to finally 'put her down' [= 'kill her'] at the veterinary clinic, and my reflections then about how death is not like in the movies: death is often ugly, smelly, and disgusting. And this could be linked to the death of others.

Right now, if I had to speak on this Part Two subject, I would have a *mountain of words* to say. My speaking would be easy, effortless, and fluent – because the subject has all the previous 1 [= high content/interest], 2 [= remembered easily], and 3 [= a desire to say it] elements. Tip 19 will look at this point in more detail.

So, remember, even a good speaker will *not* speak well with a *bad* topic, and a *bad* speaker will speak *much* better with a *good* topic. Pick the best topic you can.

## Hint 2: Just Think

### Exercise 30

Think about the approach that this speaker is using.

**Speaker Thoughts or Thinking:** A trip? Ummmm. Hualien, or maybe Las Vegas? Which was more fun, more interesting? Which one had some interesting things? Las Vegas was amazing actually. What did I do? Went to a casino of course. Circus something. And a show. With Norio, that Japanese guy. I skied with him later. Got tired of the buffet food. Tried it a lot. Went to Caesar's Palace as well. And there was that... what's the word... fountain! Outside... Mirage. Or maybe it was a... what is it called... volcano! Nothing real of course. Everything was false and... artificial in that town. And downtown had all those light. Heaps of lights.

**Examiner:** Alright. Are you ready to begin?

Consider these two points.

1. Taking notes is not easy. It takes time, and you can not put a great deal of information down on the paper.
2. The page in the Part Two booklet already has bullet points, giving hints on how to structure your talk.

Speaking *to yourself* is easy, and quick, and perhaps allows you to explore the topic better than ‘clunky’ writing. In Exercise 30, the speaker is doing this – speaking to himself. This is sometimes called ‘musing’, and it may actually help more. In other words, your ‘thinking time’ is the full minute, and there is no note-taking.

Remember, you are not judged by this ‘musing’, so you do not have to worry about the standard of English you are using. If you wish, you could muse quietly, or very quietly, or just in your mind. If you want, you can even tell the examiner what you are doing.

- I’ll just muse aloud for a minute.
- Don’t listen to me now, okay; I’m just musing.
- Let me muse for a while here before taking notes.
- I want to think aloud right now to collect my thoughts.
- [The honest approach] I read that it might help my talking at this point if I muse for a little while.

... or you could just say nothing – just muse. Again, practise this a few times, and see if it works for you.

# Tip 13

## Notetaking

The Long Turn is similar to telling a story. There *is* actually a good structure for telling stories, and native speakers use it without thinking, so that their stories are more interesting. This structure has four parts, as follows:

1. **O**rientation [the time, place, and main characters],
2. **C**haracters and/or Plot,
3. **O**utcome,
4. **E**valuation or personal reflection.

Extra talk or ‘embellishments’ are built around these four ‘OCOE’ parts. It may help you to follow this natural structure. Thus, in my case, I would write:

- O Las Vegas, 1985, Norio, travelling
- C buffet, gambling, show, downtown, features... etc.
- O tired of it, bored, left...
- E good for visit, never live there, 100% workers w casinos.

This, in my case, would certainly create clear and effective story-telling, much better than using the Long Turn speaking cues. It ‘divides’ up the speaking into four main parts, which allows you to use the ‘hedges’, ‘discourse markers’, and ‘tones’ which Tip 16 will explain. This prevents one long boring ramble.

To begin the fourth part – the evaluation – you could use:

- ‘Anyway’ or ‘Anyhow’ (= Getting back to the story)
- ‘Basically’ (= To say this simply).

If this is real story-telling, the story is chosen for its interest. Then, the evaluation is often:

- |        | <b>Good</b>  |        | <b>Bad</b>  |
|--------|--|--------|---|
| It was | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• incredible.</li><li>• amazing.</li></ul> | It was | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• horrible.</li><li>• disgusting.</li></ul> |

- hilarious.
- fantastic.
- awful.
- terrible.

In your case, the ‘story’ is forced on you, so your evaluation or personal reflection is more likely to be something such as:

- Basically, I'd say it was a pretty good book, and I'd recommend it to others.
- Anyhow, she was an interesting person, and certainly influenced me a lot.
- Basically, the job pretty much tired me out, and I'd never do it again.
- Anyway, most of us thought it wasn't such a good experience – certainly I thought so.

Again, you could practise this hint a few times, and see if it works for you. Tip 12 suggests three different methods for your one minute thinking/note-taking time, as follows.

1. Just musing over these four parts.
2. Just writing down the four headings, and musing about the details.
3. Taking notes in point form, as shown at the beginning of this tip.

See which system works best for you. Now, how do you muse? I can even tell you how to do that – use the Long Turn cues and follow Tip 15, Part One.

# Tip 14

## Getting Started

### Hint 1: Track the Time

#### Exercise 31

What is happening here?

**Speaker:** [after one and a half minutes talking] ... ah, so then... ah, I just ate in a... some food in a... local place. Yeah. Wait, let me tell you about the best thing that happened in Las Vegas. I just remembered! This was really interesting too! It began when my friend and I went to...

**Examiner:** Thank you. You can stop there.

**Speaker:** But can I just tell you about...

**Examiner:** Thank you. You can stop there.

Think about this. You have two minutes to talk. Let us say that you *can* talk for *more* than two minutes, and *try to* do this. What happens? You are stopped, or 'cut off' – suddenly and unnaturally. So what should you do?

Think about this. Use your watch, and *anticipate* the end. In other words, *know* that your time is running out, avoid being cut off, and end your talk just before the two minutes has finished. Everyone will be much happier.

You can even explain this to the examiner. Why not? Giving explanations appropriate to the situation is good and natural talking. So, at the beginning of your two-minute speaking time, you could say:

- I'll just set my stopwatch so that I'll know when to finish.
- I'll use my watch to time this talk?
- I'll time this also, if you don't mind.
- It's probably better if I also know when my time is up.
- I'm not sure if I'll talk more than two minutes, but in case I do, I'll have my watch ready.
- [The honest approach] I read in a strategies book that it could help me to also keep an eye on the timing.

There are many different ways to say this, or you could say nothing at all. Just look at your watch and note the time.

## Hint 2: Starting the Talk // Keep 'On Course'

How do you begin the speaking? Look at the following exercise.

### Exercise 32

1. Which speaker, A or B, begins in the best way? How is this best way structured?
2. What is happening to Speaker C?
3. What do you think of Speaker D's beginning?

**Speaker A:** Okay, I'm going to talk about a trip that I've taken, and it was when I went to Las Vegas. I went there 20 years ago. I was actually just passing through... [And so on]

**Speaker B:** I went to Las Vegas about 20 years ago. I was actually just passing through... [And so on].

**Speaker C:** Right, I went to Las Vegas about 20 years ago. I was traveling around, because I like traveling. Some reasons I like traveling are that it can open my mind and help me make friends. My friends like traveling to, so usually I try to travel with them. We often go to... [And so on].

**Speaker D:** In this ever-changing world, with technology growing everyday, there are a multitude of travel options open to the discerning tourist, which is why I will talk about a trip that I have had. [And so on].

It is probably clear that Speaker A begins in the best way, by clearly *specifying* the subject in an organised way. Such 'specificity' *is* repetitive, but introductions...

1. can keep your talk 'on course' – that is, on the correct topic,
2. are a logical *foundation* on which to continue the rest of the talk,
3. are appropriate here, since there is more formality in the Part Two speaking (compared to Part One), because this speaking is planned, lasts longer, and the beginning is formally signaled by the examiner.

Point 1 is important, and Speaker C does not do this. This speaker 'drifts' away from the *specific*

topic onto a *general* talk about travel. This is a common problem. What happens is that...



This is similar to the issue discussed in Tip 4, Part Two, Case 2. In that case, the speaker drifts from the *impersonal* to the *personal*. In the present example, the speaker drifts from the *specific* to the *general*. There is no ‘task fulfilment’ category in IELTS speaking, but in both cases, the more experienced IELTS examiner will realise that you have taken ‘the easiest road’. Many people can talk *generally* about their hobby, but can they talk *specifically* about the time they hurt themselves doing it? The examiner will realise that you do not have the English ability to handle *unfamiliarity* of the topic. You may be IELTS Vocabulary Five:

has *some* words for *familiar* and *unfamiliar* topics

... but you are not Six:

has words for a *wide* variety of topics.

You may be IELTS Fluency & Coherence Five:

*basically* coherent

... but since off-topic responses can be considered *not* coherent (since they make no sense in relation to the question which was asked), you are not Six:

*mostly* coherent.

Do not begin as Speaker D does. It is clearly *not true*. The actual truth is that a piece of paper in a test is forcing a subject onto you, so ‘essay’ introductions are not appropriate, again pushing the Fluency Band Score [by ‘overusing discourse markers’], and Vocabulary Band Score [by ‘showing limited flexibility’] towards Five.

Similarly, do *not* begin by saying:

1. - If someone were to ask me about [topic], I would have to say that...  
- If I have to say a few words on [topic], then I would say...
2. With respect to your question, what springs to mind is...
3. To answer your question, ...





‘essay’ approach. Again, if it *is* interesting, prove it by saying why.

Yeah, it’s actually interesting to consider an accident I have suffered – since it links to *another* issue: domestic *dogs*, and the menace to the public they constitute, and just how *powerless* the common man is to do anything about it. Anyhow, let me explain what happened.

Long and elaborate beginnings (as with all fluff) ...

1. will sound memorised (showing bad pronunciation),
2. will be recognised as memorisation by the IELTS examiner (and consequently totally ignored),
3. are usually illogical or inappropriate (as the previous examples show), lowering your IELTS mark.

It is better to simply, accurately, and honestly establish the ‘parameters’ of your talk, then show your *real* speaking ability in what follows. You could use the following patterns.

Discourse Marker	Introduction		General Subject	and	Specific Subject
- Okay, - (Al)right, - So, - Beginning then,	- let me	- describe (to you)	[General subj, <i>in full</i> ]	and	[it] is/ was
	- allow me to	- tell you about			[Spec. Subj.]
- I'm going to - I'll - I intend to - I have to - the page asks me to - I'm required to - Upon considering/thinking about	- tell you	about	[General subj, <i>in full</i> ]	so I'll	- pick - choose - talk about
	- talk				I've chosen

Notice that we can begin the talk with the discourse markers that we looked at in Tip 6, Exercise 19, Part Two, Item 6, which mean: ‘I want to change the subject [to what the page states]’. Thus, if the Long Turn subject states,

**Talk about a pet or animal you have owned, or which you know,**

... a beginning would be,      Alright, the prompt asks me to talk about a pet *I have owned*, so I'll choose a cat we had, named Bluey.

... or...      Okay, let me describe to you a pet *I know*, and it is actually one of my friend's dogs.

... or...      So, upon thinking about a pet I have owned or know, I've chosen the very first cat my family had, named Mitzi.

 **Exercise 33**

Practise beginning the Individual Long Turn using the following subjects. Use a simple introduction to put yourself 'on-course', and stay on-course as you speak for the full two minutes as well.

- Talk about...
1. an argument that you have had.
  2. something that you have built.
  3. a friend you have known.
  4. a piece of technology that you like.
  5. a time when you encountered a different culture.

# Tip 15

## Getting Through It

Well, you now know how to start, but now you have to ‘get through’ the two minute talk. This tip – Tip 15 – has three parts. The first two parts give you suggestions on how to structure your speaking to get through the talk most effectively, and the last part looks at how to end it.

### Part One: Organising – Look, Ask, Task

The Long Turn page shown at the beginning of Tip 12 asks you to talk about a trip you have had, and gives speaking ‘cues’ – that is, short hints telling you what you could talk about. These cues suggest that you talk about:

- where you went
- why you went there
- what happened during the trip... and then say how the trip finally ended.

So, after introducing the topic as we discussed in Hint 2 of the previous tip, how could you continue? Part Two Speaking is informal, and this means that you could continue in whatever way you like. The cues are actually very obvious, and any ‘on-task’ talking will answer them all, so you do not need to look at them. Remember also, there is no task fulfilment judgement. The important point is that you do:

- talk,
- talk *well*,
- keep on-course, and do not drift into the general,
- talk at some *length* – at least well over one minute,
- finish appropriately if speaking less than two minutes.

Tip 13 suggested following the OCOE Approach, adding comments and embellishments for each point. If you do this, you will cover all the cues anyway, and be on-topic. However, weaker speakers of English might still find this difficult, and they might drift into the general. This means that the cues on the Task Page could be useful for them.

Part One of this tip suggests that you if you *are* a weaker speaker, *use the cues* on the page, *systematically*, to your advantage. This can be done with following three steps, as follows.

1. Look at the cue. (Look)
2. Change it *aloud* to a grammatically correct question *to yourself*. (Ask)
3. Answer this question. (Task)

Thus, [Step 1] we look at the first bullet point, and silently read,

(Talk about) where you went.

Then, [Step 2] we say aloud to ourselves,

Where *did I go*?

and then, [Step 3], we answer the question starting with a discourse marker or ‘hedge’.

Well, ... I went to Las Vegas ... [And so on].

Let us shorten these three steps to ‘Look, ask, task’. We can follow this procedure for the rest of the cues.

	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
<b>Look</b>	Why you went there.	What happened during the trip.	How the trip finally ended.
<b>Ask</b>	Why did I go there?	What happened during the trip?	How did the trip finally end?
<b>Task</b>	Well, I was actually just passing through. It was part of...	Ah, on the first day, I just went gambling. I heard someone...	Hmmm, basically I stayed there for about a week, but I...

 = Actual Speaking (with parts missing)

Can I repeat: you do not *have to* follow this procedure. Better speakers do not need this, and it may ‘cramp’ their way of speaking. In that case, follow the OCOE Approach in Tip 13. However, I recommend the ‘Look, Ask, Task’, for *weaker* speakers, since it provides a good, structured, and logical way to proceed through the Long Turn, and keep you ‘on-topic’. And let me give you this fact – educated, intelligent, *native speakers* of English, with no preparation or advice, will sometimes use this strategy in the real IELTS test. This means it must be good.

Incidentally, you could also use this for your musing or thinking time. Then, the musing procedure is: 'Look, Ask, *Muse*'.

Where did I go? Okay, I'll pick Vegas. Why did I go there? Hmm, traveling, 1985 I think. What happened during the trip? Hmm, buffets, gambling, with Norio, a show, uhhhhh, downtown, I went there too. How did the trip end? Tired of the place. Bored. Just left.

## Part Two: Organising – Think about Chronology

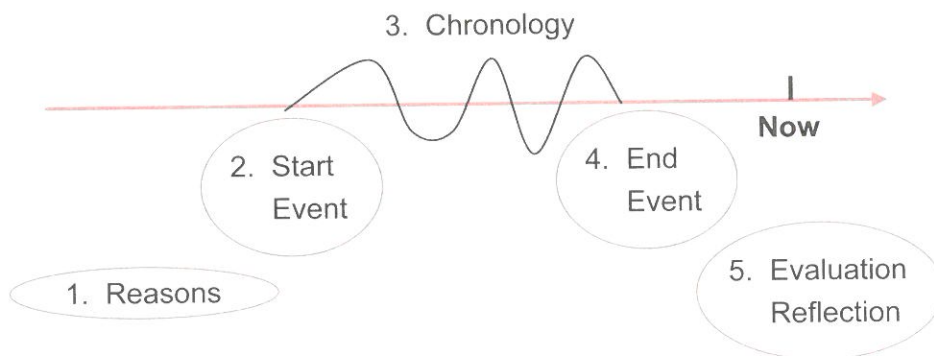
### Exercise 34

Which of the following speakers gives a better answer, and why?

**Speaker A:** I went to Las Vegas. It was good, apart from the fact that I lost a lot of money. But I was thinking of staying there for a while. After that town, I was going to go back to Los Angeles, but the bus stop was really scary. But, anyhow, on the second day I went to a casino, ah, and then the next day a show, which was interesting ... but at the casino I lost money, but at the beginning I had decided not to gamble. So when I first arrived, I said I wouldn't gamble.

**Speaker B:** I went to Las Vegas. I arrived there in the afternoon on a greyhound bus, and quickly found a youth hostel in which to stay. Then I just took it easy for the rest of the day, checking out the scenery, as they say. The next day I ventured into a casino, which was interesting in a way, but all glitzy and shallow; but the day after I went to a show, and that surprised me by having far more interesting elements. For a start, there were...

Many IELTS Speaking Task Two topics are based around *narration* – that is, talking about events of some duration from the past. It may help you to think *chronologically* – that is, to talk in order of *time*, from the *beginning*, to the *end*, as Speaker B does. A chronological account has a natural logic, and can create a better flow of talk. Be careful, though, because there should be other aspects to your talk, such as reasons, comparisons, and evaluation. These can, however, be placed around the central chronology – for example, as shown.



In the ‘OCOEF’ approach, the chronology belongs inside the **C** [= Characters/Plot], with the **O**rientation before this, and the **O**utcome and **E**valuation at the end. If using the cues with a ‘Look, Ask, Task’ approach, the chronology begins with a cue such as ‘[Talk about] what happened’.

Whatever approach you use, think about using the chronology to your advantage.

## Part Three: Ending

This hint is actually the simplest of all. Let us first look at an exercise.

### Exercise 35

#### Case 1

What is wrong with the way this speaker organises and finishes the Long Turn?

Ah, firstly, I went to Las Vegas...  
 Secondly, I went there because... [And so on]  
 Thirdly, during the trip I...  
 In conclusion, the trip ended by...

#### Case 2

What is wrong with the way this speaker finishes?

So it was a good trip. ... Good enough, I suppose... I had fun... more or less...  
 maybe I'll go again... Yeah... or, well... you know...  
 [Long silence]

# Tip 16

## More about Tones

### Preliminary

In the IELTS Speaking test, you are given a score for pronunciation, which involves having a ‘range’ of features. The public version of the descriptors gives:

<b>Pronunciation: 1. Uses a range of pronunciation features</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
uses a limited range of pronunciation features	uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control	uses a wide range of pronunciation features

Extracted from the complete IELTS SPEAKING Band Descriptors (public version).

Let us be clear: pronunciation is *one quarter* of your score. It is important. One aspect of pronunciation is using sentence stress, and to help you with this, I have included sentence-stress exercises in Tips 1 and 3, and all through this book I have *italicised* many words in the text to show the *natural* use of stress in talking. Try reading the previous sentence aloud, putting stress on the italicised words. The wider your range of pronunciation features, the higher your pronunciation score, so let us move to another important aspect of pronunciation: *tone*.

Let us first say that tones which show mood – that is, giving feelings, or adding emotion and interest to a discussion – all come from *honest* speaking, which is the very first tip in this book. Most of the ‘strategies’ (especially memorisation) given by bad IELTS material have a bad effect on tone. Speak honestly, with interest in your own words [See Tip 19], and the tones should follow naturally. However, along with *mood*, tones also help give *meaning*, both to the sentence, and to the whole speech, and this will be discussed in this tip.



## Part One: Tones at Sentence Level

Okay, ... in the last few tips we discussed two approaches to the Long Turn **speaking**.

1. Introducing, ... then using the four speaking cues, and possibly **concluding**.
2. Introducing, ... then using the four-part 'story-telling' [OCOE] approach, and possibly **concluding**.

Look at these last three sentences. Saying them aloud, I say the first word with a rising tone, pause, then say the rest of the sentence, sometimes pausing on the rising tone, and then finishing with a stress and falling tone on the final word. The use of tone and stress shows the beginning and end of a 'block' or 'chunk' of message.

### Practice

- Try saying these sentences aloud. Say them naturally with the stress and tone as shown. Practise them again.
- Trying saying all of the model sentences at the end of the previous tip.

Remember, the IELTS Speaking test judges your pronunciation, and 'grouping' into 'tonal units' is part of this.

## Part Two: Tones at Conversation Level

The two approaches to the Long Turn Speaking both break the speaking into five or six parts, or blocks. We have talked about ending clearly at the end of the final Long Turn block, with a falling tone, and perhaps a statement to say that you have ended the talk. Ending clearly is certainly important, because the examiner needs to be 'cued' when to take over. We can, however, think about this further, introducing similar features of discourse and pronunciation *during* the Long Turn speaking.

There are five or six 'blocks' of speaking, and each should have a clear starting 'cue' and a clear finishing 'cue', using the pronunciation features we have discussed. Each block could begin with an introductory 'hedge', which has a rising tone...

Next, ... Ahhh, ...  
 ... or...  
 Ummm, ... Okay, ...  
 ... or...  
 Right, ... Let's see, ...

... or a rhetorical question if using 'Look, Ask, Task' Approach, with a rising tone:  
 ... or both, a rhetorical question *and* a hedge:

Where did I find it? What did I do with it? Well, ...  
 Why was it interesting? How long did I have it? Ummm, ...

Each block should finish with the usual stress, falling tone, and pause. Thus, each of the five/six blocks should follow the pattern:



Combining all the IELTS Long Turn hints from the previous two tips, and this tip, gives a natural and structured way to do the Long Turn. Using the 'Look, Ask, Task' Approach, we can put together the actual speaking, as follows:

**Notes**

**Tip 14**  
 Hint 2:  
 Starting the Talk

**Tip 15**  
 Part One:  
 Organising:  
 (Look, Ask, Task)

**Tip 15**  
 Part Two:  
 Ending

**Actual Speaking (Parts deleted)**

Okay, ... let me talk about a trip that I have *taken*, and it was when I went to Las **Vegas**.

Why did I go there? Well, ... I was actually just passing through. It was part of a longer trip, when I was backpacking. I wanted to see the world so ...  
 ... eventually ended up in **Vegas**.

What happened during the trip? Ah, ... on the first day I just went gambling. I heard someone once describe Las Vegas as the eighth wonder of the world, but actually there's not a lot to do besides gambling. I did go to ...  
 ... some of his **jokes**.

How did the trip finally *end*? Hmmm, ... basically I stayed there for about a week, but I grew tired of the casino buffet lunches, and soon realised there wasn't much else to do, so ...  
 ... but to move **on**.

Okay, ... I think I'll finish at **that**

Block 1  
 Block 2  
 Block 3  
 Block 4  
 Block 5

**Practice**

Try repeating this Long Turn, putting your own words into the gaps. Try saying the whole Long Turn naturally, with the stress and tone as shown.

 **Exercise 36**

**Part One**

Practise the whole of the Individual Long Turn according to the hints in Tips 12 to 15, and this tip, using the following tables to guide you. We will use the ‘Look, Ask, Task’ Approach here, but remember, the OCOE Approach is just as good. You can first fill in the tables with some notes if you want to make this exercise easier.

Remember, the introduction is the first ‘block’ of speech, and the subsequent question cues make up a block each (Blocks 2 to 5, as shown at the bottom of each table). If there is still time remaining, the final block is the statement of completion.

**One**

Topic	Talk about an argument that you have had.			
Look	Who it was with.	What it was about.	What happened in the argument.	How the argument ended.
Ask				
Task				
	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5

**Two**

Topic	Talk about something that you have built.			
Look	How you built it.	Any problems you had.	What you did with it afterwards.	Where it is now.
Ask				

<b>Task</b>				
	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5

= Part which will be spoken

**Three**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Talk about a friend you have known.</b>			
<b>Look</b>	What type of friendship it was	How you met him/her.	What he/she is like.	Where that friend is now.
<b>Ask</b>				
<b>Task</b>				
	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5

**Four**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Talk about a piece of technology that you like.</b>			
<b>Look</b>	How it works.	How you first encountered it.	Why you like it.	What problems it has sometimes caused you.
<b>Ask</b>				
<b>Task</b>				
	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5

**Five**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Talk about a time when you encountered a different culture.</b>			
<b>Look</b>	How you encountered it.	What you liked/ disliked about it.	How it is different from yours.	Whether you would like to encounter it again.
<b>Ask</b>				

<b>Task</b>				
	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5

= Part which will be spoken

## Part Two

Now keep practising with the following Part Two topic cards. Use the OCOE, or the ‘Look, Ask, Task’ approach, or whatever way you wish, but remember to try to ‘block’ the subject groups, and use the features of pronunciation that we have discussed.

### Six

**Describe a park or garden that you have visited.**

You should talk about:

- where you went
- the natural features there
- what happened during your visit

and what you liked or did not like about the area.

### Seven

**Talk about a TV program that you like watching.**

You should talk about:

- the content of the program
- the situation in which you watch it
- why you like it

and whether you will continue watching this in the future.

### Eight

**Describe an educational institute that you have attended.**

You should talk about:

- what sort of institute it was
- the buildings and constructions
- any natural environment around it

and what you like(d) or dislike(d) about your time there.

## Nine

**Talk about an important decision that you had to make.**

You should talk about:

- what the decision was
- the choices that you had
- what influenced you at the time

and whether the decision proved to be a good or bad one.

## Ten

**Talk about a significant day of your life.**

You should talk about:

- what happened on that day
- why it was significant
- how you felt and reacted

and whether it is a good or bad memory.

## Eleven

**Describe something you own which is very important to you.**

You should talk about:

- where you got it from
- how long you have had it
- what you use it for

and explain why it is important to you.

## Twelve

**Describe a specific animal that you like.**

You should talk about:

- what type of animal it is
- why you like it
- its actions and behaviour

and whether you will always like it.



## SPEAKING PART THREE

### TIPS: 17 - 19

We now move to the third part of the IELTS Speaking Test: the discussion. This is similar to the first part (the Interview), except that you talk about more difficult and less familiar issues, and are expected to answer in more detail and depth.



# Tip 17

## Buy Time

### Hint 1: Before Answering

#### Exercise 37

#### Part One

The questions and answers in this exercise are natural and unplanned speaking between two English native speakers: myself and 'Sue', recorded in a studio.

1. How does Sue answer the four questions that I ask her?
2. What is the same about all these answers?

**Andrew:** Ah, I see, um... and how much does it cost to join?

**Sue:** Ah, well, there're different fees depending on your situation. So, for you, if you're not a student, it's 37 pounds a year. Um, and for a couple, it's 51 pounds a year.

**Andrew:** I see. And how do you join?

**Sue:** Well, it's really easy. You just get an application form from the office. Ah, you fill in the cheque, and you send the cheque back to the office.

**Andrew:** Okay, um, well, the most important question is – what do you do?

**Sue:** Well, we do lots of different things. Um, we do collection and recycling schemes. Uhhh, we do a bit of petitioning to MPs, just to make them aware.

**Andrew:** Um, do you have entertainment?

**Sue:** Yes, we have a few things. We have the radio station. They broadcast between two and seven in the evening, and there's the television in the lounge area.

#### Part Two

1. What is happening to the speaker here?
2. How should he deal with the situation?

**Examiner:** Why did your parents give you your name?

**Speaker:** Name? Why... I think... name. Name! They – they – they... they... I mean, they name! Name! My name is Huang Li-Fu. I mean, that's the name they gave me. They g-g-gave... ve-ve... What? I mean... my name...

In Part One, you might have noticed that Sue said a sentence *before* giving each answer – sentences which did not really answer the questions. Sue put the following before each of the four answers respectively:

- Ah, well, there're different fees depending on your situation.
- Well, it's really easy.
- Well, we do lots of different things.
- Yes, we have a few things.

These sentences were *not* planned. Therefore, they must simply be a natural way that native speakers will sometimes answer. In the rest of the speaking, both Sue and I do this in almost every answer. But why? Well, consider the question:

Could you tell me about some cultural events in your country?

As with many questions in the IELTS Speaking Test, it is actually a slightly unnatural question, and it is strange to be asked this suddenly, without it being connected to the topic before. This means that the question will probably be difficult to *immediately* answer, even for native speakers. In Tip 4, Parts Two and Three, we said that short 'thinking' silences are possible, especially if they come with natural 'body language' to show that you *are* indeed thinking. However, if you can only keep silent, and produce bad 'body language' by opening your mouth, looking frightened, and struggling to think of something to say (producing long silences and false starts), then you should do what Sue would do. Give yourself *some time to think and organise your thoughts* by *first* saying words such as:

- A. It's quite a coincidence that you've asked me that because [Reason].
- B. I guess cultural events fall into two categories: the western ones, and the ones imported by immigrants.
- C. Some of our cultural events are actually based on other cultures. Do you want to hear about one of them, or would you prefer a western example?
- D. That's quite a challenging question to answer, actually, since [Reason].
- E. What *are* some cultural events in my country?
- F. I can think of three straight away: Christmas, Easter, and ANZAC day.
- G. Well, there are many different cultural events in my country. Let's see. I wonder which

one would be most interesting. I could talk about ...

H. Culture? That's something I studied, actually, in university, and it's a big issue in my country, with its complex multi-culture.

I. Just give me a little time to think.

J. Hmmmmmm.

## Exercise 38

1. Look at the previous responses A to J. Which speaking pattern is being used?

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Musing over the background | 6. A personal reaction     |
| 2. Announcing the count       | 7. Reflecting the question |
| 3. Considering choices        | 8. A rhetorical question   |
| 4. Evaluating the question    | 9. A thinking noise        |
| 5. Expressing division        | 10. The honest approach    |

2. Look at Sue's four natural 'buying time' responses. Which pattern did she use? Check the Answer Section to see if you are right.

Remember, good speakers *never* think about 'patterns' – they just speak. Keeping this in mind, let us look at some of these response patterns. In Response A, the speaker gives a personal reaction. This can also be expressed in adverbs or adverbial phrases such as:

Actually, ...	=	This might surprise you
In actual fact, ...	=	This is very different or opposite to what you might think
As a matter of fact, ...	=	Let me add some interesting comment
Basically, ...	=	To say this simply
To be perfectly honest with you, ...	=	This might be surprising

... which can be spoken with appropriate body language [Tip 4, Part Three], such as a thoughtful face. This personal reaction could be a more extended [honest!] response such as:

- Actually, I'm glad you asked me that question because (of a reason).
- Now *that* seems like a difficult question to answer.

Response E is a question that the speaker is saying back to himself – that is, the speaker is

organising his thoughts by first asking *himself* the question! This is called a ‘rhetorical question’, and is a *very* useful technique – in fact, I have recommended it in Tip 15, Part One, as a way to organise the Long Turn speaking. Let us give another example of this.

**Examiner:** Why did your parents give you your name?

**Speaker:** Now why *did* my parents give me my name?  
I’m not sure actually. Maybe...

Response C also finishes with a question – but it is a ‘real’ question. The question which the examiner asked is ‘reflected’ back. We will discuss this in the next tip. Examples of Response D – ‘Evaluating the Question’ – were actually shown in Tip 10, when the evaluation was based on the over-simplification of the question. Response H – ‘Musing over the Background’ – might be the easiest. Just think about the subject of the question, and talk about a context or situation in which you have heard about it. Anything will do. It is even possible to use several of these patterns in one long ‘muse’ – for example, a thinking noise, rhetorical question, evaluation of the question, and division.

**Examiner:** Are you happy with your life?

**Speaker:** Hmmmmm. Am I happy with my life? Is *anyone* happy with their life? That’s a tough question to answer, you know? I guess I’m happy in some ways, but not in others.

Response I is refreshingly honest, and perfectly natural. Other examples of this are:

- Let me think for a moment.
- Ah, let’s think about that.
- Just give me a moment.
- Wait a moment. I need to think.
- Ah, I’m just thinking right now.
- Okay, just wait while I think.

The main point to notice is that none of these actually *answer* the question at all. They just ‘buy’ some time before you have to give the actual answer. And you could probably give a response like this almost *immediately*, and probably reasonably *fluently*, thus not have the bad awkward starts which lower your IELTS band score. And, as Sue has shown, buying time is a completely natural way of speaking.

## Short Circuits

This leads us to Exercise 37, Part Two. In this case, the speaker is having a ‘short-circuit’. He is

‘seizing up’ completely. This can happen to everyone, even to me, but again, what matters is not *what* you say, but *how* you say it. The speaker needs to forget about the question, and ‘buy time’ in a complete and honest way.

- Speaker:**
- Wait a minute! Let’s just stop. Can you ask me the question again?
  - Whoa! Whoa! I think I’m having a short circuit here. Mixing everything up. Your question was about why my parents gave me my name, right?
  - Stop! My mind is a mess right now. Too nervous I guess. And frankly, I don’t think I even know the answer to the question.
  - I’m going to stop here; take a few breaths, you know. As you can see, this question’s really rattled my brain. Which is pretty easy to do, actually.
  - Ah, what am I trying to say here? Basically I’ve got no idea where I’m going or what I’m doing. Why don’t you hit me with that question just one more time.
  - Oh dear. There goes my IELTS Seven, right? Hey, this could happen to *you* too, you know.

If you ever get into a panic/short-circuit situation, stop, take a deep breath, smile, and talk yourself out of it. Use some body language and humour. Just buy some time obviously, honestly, and naturally to allow your mind to settle, and move forward. This *is* a high-level speaking skill, and will impress the examiner far far more than the effect due to the short-circuit.

## Hint 2: While Answering

So, we know to buy time *before* answering. What about *while* answering? How can you buy time then? Firstly, we can mention hedges and vagueness. Hedges are little bits of phrasing used to avoid coming straight to the point. Vagueness is using similar bits of phrasing when it is difficult to make the point. Both are natural, and very useful, since it can be difficult sometimes (even for me) to make a point exactly.

	Hedge		Vagueness
He built a	kind of	a toy	or something.
	sort of		or whatever.
	you know		or other thing.

‘Sort of’ is particularly useful when you... sort of... cannot think of exactly how to speak out your thoughts. Do not be afraid to use it.

There are other ways to buy time in mid-sentence. Look at the tapescript at the start of this tip. You can see that Sue uses ‘Well’, ‘ah’, and ‘um’ a great deal, but do not do this too much, or too slowly.

Actually, if you listen to native speakers, you will hear them... *kind of...* pausing in mid sentence, and sometimes using indirect phrasing, *and stuff like that*, or when they cannot think of how to finish, they use lazy endings, *or whatever*, and... *you know...* *say that sort of thing*. They might even ask themselves a rhetorical question in mid-speech, when they... *now what was I talking about?...* that’s right, questions in mid-speech to help organise one’s thinking. So... *have I answered the question?...* I think I may have by demonstrating... *well...* ways that are natural, so... *probably...* you could realise that the italicised writing in this paragraph is... *how can I say it?...* a good example of the way native speakers buy time in mid speaking, ... *so, did that answer the question or not?...* I think so.

So, this is Tip 17 – to buy time (if you need to) when faced with complex questions in Part Three of the Speaking Test, and similarly buy time in mid-answer as required. Let us practise.

### Exercise 39

Write your first thoughts, or some ways to ‘buy some time’, for the following questions. Remember, do *not* actually answer the questions. We will do that later, in the next tip. Right now, just write a natural reaction. Think about some of the speaking patterns, but also be honest. Some possible answers are in Appendix 3.

1. What are the main industries in your country?
2. Who is your favourite writer?
3. Why did you choose to study [X] ?
4. What events are most significant in your country’s history?
5. What do you think of western food?
6. Tell me about your grandparents?
7. Tell me about your primary school days?
8. Why do you think looking after babies is difficult?
9. What is the single greatest invention of the last few centuries?
10. How do you think global warming can be dealt with?

11. What is the main cause of pollution in your country?
12. What do you think of euthanasia/mercy killing?

## Concluding Thoughts

Buying time is useful and very natural, and good speakers do it all the time. However, good speakers also may *not* buy time if they know an answer. There is nothing wrong with...

**Examiner:** What is deoxyribonucleic acid?

**Speaker:** That's D-N-A. It's a very long, double-helix molecule which encodes our genetic information, which in turn, determines just about everything about us, and DNA, I believe, exists in just about every cell of our body.

That good speaker might also have *first* said,

That's a strange question to ask in an IELTS test.

and continued,

And I'll probably surprise you by being able to answer it.

'Buy time' if you need to, and if you do *not* need to, the choice is yours. Good speakers follow their *honest* feelings. Do not 'buy time' if *it is not true*, for example, when asked a totally *uninteresting* question, by saying,

Hmmm. That's an interesting question.

Such responses – memorised, unnecessary, unthinking, inappropriate, and somewhat meaningless – cause your IELTS score to go down! [See Tip 6].

Once again, as Tips 1 and 5 tell us, honesty is the basis of good speaking. If you have no immediate answer, respond *naturally* and express (in English) your feelings about the questions. If you *are* confused, express your confusion. If there *are* choices, consider them aloud. If you *do* see three clear answers, announce the count. If you *do* have a 'gut' reaction, say it. If you need time, say so. Think aloud. Speculate a bit. I do it myself.

# Tip 18

## Move to a Groove

This tip follows from the previous one, and has three separate hints.

### Hint 1: Make Room to Move

Now, answer the following question as well as you can.

Can you explain lysergic acid diethylamide to me?

How did you go with this question? How did you answer? Did you simply sit there surprised, with your mouth open, thinking hard for something to say? Actually, if you follow Tip 4, Part Three: Body Language, you would not open your mouth, but instead nod your head thoughtfully. But then what would you say?

This tip, Tip 18, is based on the fact that the IELTS Speaking Test is *not a general knowledge test*, and there is no 'Task Response' or 'Task Achievement' category (as there are in the Writing) [See also the IELTS Quiz, Question 7]. IELTS is an English language test. The main requirement is *not* to answer questions correctly, but to *use English appropriately*.

In the discussion to Tip 4, Part Two, Exercise 13, Case 1, we decided that some short 'thinking' silence can be helpful and natural in order to answer a question well, particularly if your face and body also show that you are just organising thoughts for the answer. However, IELTS examiners must regard *long* silences as signs that you do not have the English ability to respond to the question or the situation you are in. The following is much better.

**Examiner:** Can you explain lysergic acid diethylamide acid to me?

**Speaker:** [*short silence*] What? I'm afraid I don't know what that means? What does it mean exactly?

**Examiner:** You know, LSD.

**Speaker:** Oh, LSD. That drug! Right, now I understand.

Of course, in Part Three of the Speaking Test you will not be asked very difficult questions, but you may be asked ones which are not perfectly clear to you, or which you feel that you do not have the knowledge to answer. Thus, you have 'room' to use approaches such as:



- Asking for clarification.  
[What do you mean by 'western' food?]
- Saying when you do not know, but *saying why*. [Tip 8]  
[I'm afraid I don't have much knowledge about this because all my life I've only eaten Chinese food.]
- Changing the subject *slightly*, and *saying why*. [Tip 8]  
[Yeah, that's a hard question for me because I don't know much about the economy of my country, and I'm not really interested in that stuff, but I think I can talk about the economy of my hometown – y'know, the local economy. Is that alright?]

These approaches *must* be good because they are exactly what native speakers would do, and in Part Three of the test, you are allowed some 'negotiation', or 'room to move'. The important point is that you are speaking appropriately, at some length, and in English, in order to overcome a problem, and that is the definition of good speaking.

Of course, you cannot change the subject *completely*. You are expected to talk about the subjects given to you, and those subjects are chosen to *not* need specific knowledge. Thus, if your English ability is not good enough for a topic, then the test will show this. That is the point of the test. Do not think that you can 'break' this feature, and completely reject a topic just so that you can talk about one you are more familiar with – for example, your hometown. If the topic is within your experience (as it probably should be) then you are expected to talk about it – but, as Tip 17 demonstrated, perhaps you could explain firstly why it is difficult to answer.

## Hint 2: Find a Groove

### Exercise 40

The speaker here 'buys time' (or decides not to, as appropriate), but what is missing from the following two answers?

#### Case 1

**Examiner:** Do you like the buildings in your home town?

**Speaker:** [There's many different sorts of buildings.] Ummm, I like some... except... well, I don't like many... just the... it depends on which part. Ummm...

## Case 2

**Examiner:** Did you enjoy your university studies?

**Speaker:** [Oh, it's hard to say]. I mean, the campus was well located... but it wasn't such a good university... apart from... well, that's... but...

Now, what is causing the *disfluency* in the following four examples?

## Case 3

**Examiner:** What are the main industries in your country?

**Speaker:** [Main industries? There are many, I suppose]. Ummm, we have... tourism... except... maybe that's not a main industry... but agriculture... or maybe... well, that's in the past. Well, we do make cars... but that's small I think. Ummm...

## Case 4

**Examiner:** Who is your favourite writer?

**Speaker:** [Well, I've never thought about that, actually.] I read very little... some novels, umm, different ones. Ummm, but... I don't know who wrote the last one... uh, it was good. There was another... uh, but that book was just okay... so... ummmm...

## Case 5

**Examiner:** Why did you choose to study [X]?

**Speaker:** [Probably just one main reason.] I was talking to my father, or was it my mother. Ummm, my brother didn't have a... but that had nothing to do with it. Ummmmmm...

## Case 6

**Examiner:** What events are most significant in your country's history?

**Speaker:** [Ah, history is not my strongpoint, y'know.] Ummm, in 1915, there was an attack... and they decided to try to take... the soldiers that is... ummm, took control of a part of Turkey for nine months. Eventually, they decided to go... ummmmm... But...

In the first two cases, the responses are missing the most *obvious* piece of information – a

specific answer, namely, the *name* of the home town, and the *name* of the university. Starting with such a solid foundation would certainly lead to better speaking.

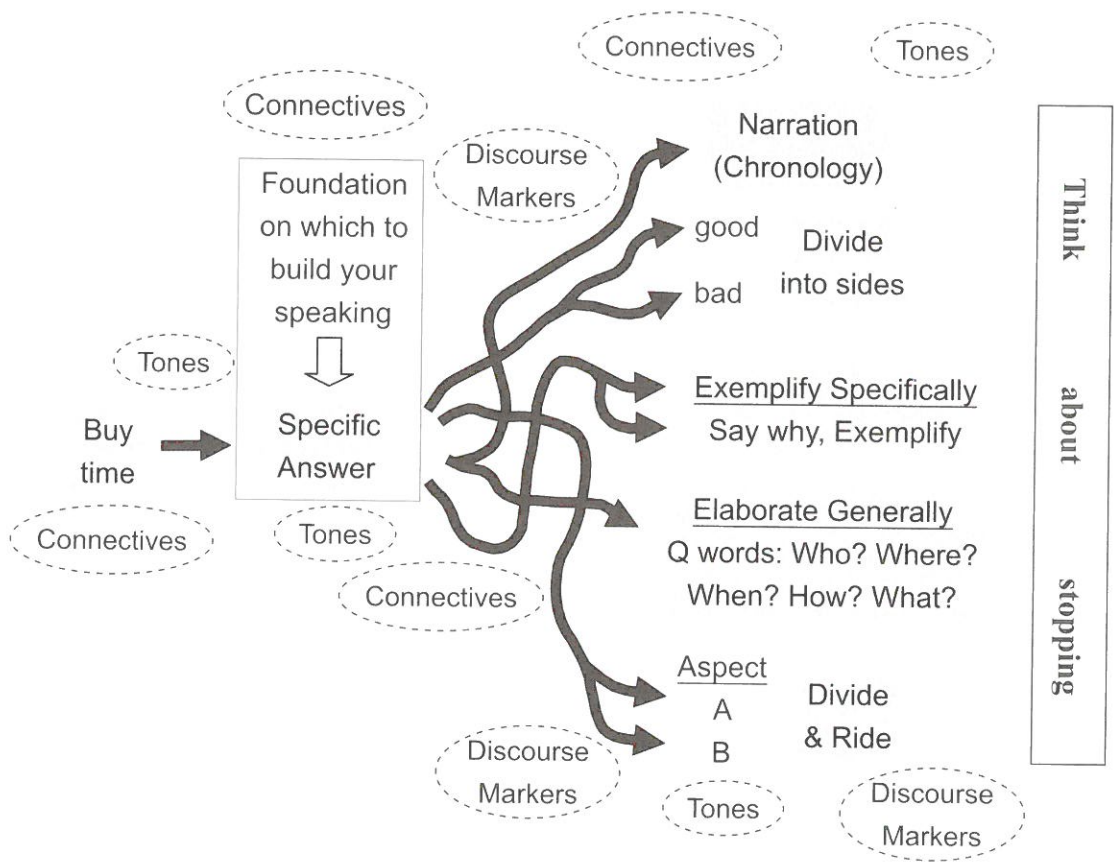
1. Well, I grew up in a suburb of Melbourne, called Nunawading, but the city itself had a CBD, or Central Business District, which has some very interesting buildings, in fact. ... [And so on].
2. Right, that could be either my bachelors or my masters degree studies, and I'll choose the latter, basically because I *did* enjoy it, actually. And that was at RMIT University in Melbourne, doing a masters of education. ... [And so on].

Cases 3 to 6 show a related problem. The questions in Part Three of the Speaking Test can be difficult. Saying the most exact and correct answer can take time – but once again, as Part One of this tip says, the most exact and correct answer is *not* needed. Trying to think about this could mean that you ‘fluff’ around, as in Cases 3 and 4, causing disfluency.

Even if you *do* know the exact answer, trying to explain it ‘backwards’, from *general* to *specific*, can also cause disfluency, as in Cases 5 and 6. Hint 2 of this tip is to find a ‘groove’ – that is, find a specific beginning to lead your speaking on a path/groove, then build on this – perhaps using Tips 8, 9, and/or 10. But you cannot use these tips until you have stated a *specific* answer – any answer, but something *specific*. Thus, for Exercise 40, Cases 3 to 6, better answers are:

3. [Buy time, if needed] We have tourism – that is, foreign tourism, although, actually I'm not sure how big this industry is. It's probably significant enough... [And so on].
4. [Buy time, if needed] I don't read much, but I read a book once that I really loved, called, 'The Name of the Rose' by Umberto Eco. He's actually an Italian writer, and his books are translated... [And so on].
5. [Buy time, if needed] Basically it was mostly because of my parents, or parental influence. You see, ... [And so on].
6. [Buy time, if needed] That would possibly be ANZAC Day, in 1915, which was my country's first taste of modern war. [And so on].

The ‘correct’ answer might not be tourism, Umberto Eco, my parents, or ANZAC Day, but being *correct* is *not* the issue – being *specific*, or finding that groove, in order to talk better *is*. This allows all the further speaking techniques to follow. This can be shown as a diagram:



### Exercise 41

Let us finish Exercise 39 from the previous tip. Use the previous diagram to answer all the questions in that exercise. Remember, go quickly to a specific answer, and then take whatever path is most natural, based on this specific beginning. Remember also, that buying some time can help you ‘nail’ this answer, since becoming specific sometimes takes a few moments of thought.

# Tip 19

## Want to Do It!

This is the last specific tip in this book, and applies not just to Part Three, but to the *whole* speaking test. Still, it is best placed here near the end of the book because it summarises many of the points made in Tip 1: The Basis of Good Speaking.

### Exercise 42

1. Which of the following speakers gives a better answer, and why?

**Examiner:** Do insects sometimes cause problems for you?

**Speaker A:** That-is-an-interesting-question. If-someone-were-to-ask-me-that-question-then-I-would-have-to-say-that-insects-sometimes-cause-problems-because-they... are... inconvenient. And I would-attribute-this-phenomenon-to-the-fact-that-they-are-very-small. For example-ants-can-get-into-your-food-and-this-is-highly-inconvenient. As-far-as-I-am-concerned-there-are-other-insects-which-also-cause-problems. Take-cockroaches-for-example-they-are-everywhere-and-move-around. Sometimes-they-are-on-the-street-too. They-are-also-highly-inconvenient. So-that-is-why-I-think-insects-cause-problems.

**Speaker B:** They sure *do*. And you know what the *worst* one is? *Cockroaches*! As a matter of *fact*, just last night, *coincidentally*, we found this *huge* cockroach [holding hands apart] wriggling around on our living room floor, leaving insect number two all over the place. Pretty *yucky*, or more to the *point*, *absolutely disgusting*! [Smiling] Anyhow, I got a slipper in my hand [raising one hand up, holding an imaginary slipper] ... y'know, those slim Asian ones everyone wears here, and chased the little bugger around the room, and then, finally, *splat* [slapping the table] – and that was the end of him. Then followed an ignominious departure down the toilet bowl, and he was *history*, as they say. Right?

2. Which of the speakers:

- A. *wanted* to give this message?
- B. had something *to say*
- C. *enjoyed* giving it?

- D. tried to make the message *interesting*?
- E. spoke about an event from his *personal* past?
- F. tried to invite a *return response* at the end?

You probably realised that the answer to all the previous questions was Speaker B, a native-speaker response [IELTS Nine], showing many of the features of natural speech that we looked at in Tip 1, Exercise 1, such as flexible use of discourse markers, onomatopoeia, fixed expression, colloquial expressions, effective stress and tone, and jokes. Speaker A [IELTS Five] could do nothing like this, tonelessly reciting a message, confusing his discourse markers, using repetition, and getting nowhere.

So, how do you move from Speaker A's response to Speaker B's response? Simple! Just follow Points A to F. Let us look at these in turn.

## Points A to C: Want it // Say it // Enjoy it!

Think about this.

If	you have no opinions, do not know much about the world do <i>not</i> care about anything, do <i>not</i> want to speak,	then	what can you say? how can you support your statements? how can you talk with true belief? how can it sound natural?
----	---	------	--

Now think about this. IELTS examiners are asking about *you!* *Your* life! They want to know what *you* think! And they will listen very carefully to *every* word you say. Why are students often so unhappy about this situation? Why is there no *enthusiasm*, *emotion*, or *passion* to say something?

Follow these six points for the IELTS Speaking test.

1. Think of the test as your big chance to speak.
2. Be happy about this.
3. Have opinions! [read/think/experience/learn about the world]
4. Believe in something!
5. Show this belief!
6. Want to say it!

## Point D: Make it Interesting

Which of the following two answers would you rather listen to? Which of them would you like to *keep* listening to?

**Speaker A:** People-like-cinemas-for-a-variety-of-reasons. Firstly-they-can-avail-themselves-of-the-cinema-atmosphere. Secondly-they-can-choose-from-a-considerable-variety-of-movies. Ah, then, another-reason-why-people-like-cinemas-for-a-variety-of-reasons-is-to-meet-many-people-and-have-considerable-fun...

**Speaker B:** *Yeah, people like cinemas. I mean, when I was there last, I remember heaps of people being there, and I remember the big screen, the popcorn, the atmosphere, although the movie was awful! Totally! A piece of crap, actually, called, In the Cut, one of the worst films ever...*

I would be very interested in hearing the rest of Answer B. *Why* was it the worst film ever? *How* bad was it? *How* did the person react? Tell me more!

Rather than being impersonal all the time [‘There are many reasons why people like parks’], *personalising* by using events from *your* life has many advantages. Here are four.

- |  |                 |                           |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Being personal to you, it can make you [Point C] actually <i>want</i> to tell the examiner your story,  |                 | Fluency Band Score.       |
| 2. Being a true event, connected with your <i>honest</i> emotions, your speaking will begin to have some natural stress and tones,   |                 | Pronunciation Band Score. |
| 3. Because of the first two points, you will more easily activate vocabulary in your mind, and work more naturally towards paraphrasing vocabulary as needed,  | helping<br>your | Vocabulary Band Score.    |
| 4. The answer becomes real and interesting, and when IELTS examiners become interested, they will (without knowing it) begin cueing you, helping you, and encouraging you with facial expressions and body language, |                 | speaking generally.       |

Examples from your life can be interesting because they are true, honest, and *real* life! Tip 8, Case 5, shows a *general* example. This speaker could have continued with a *specific* event, by saying:

I remember one time though, about six months ago, when we wanted to talk to the neighbours upstairs about the noise they were making early every morning, and it was

like talking to *animals*. Later we were told that the whole family were *chure-fei*, otherwise known as *scumbags* in English, and that no one in the apartment liked them. I could certainly see why. They began screaming at us like apes, and the father looked like he was going to get violent, and all my wife could do was keep saying, 'Don't get angry, don't get angry'. The more reasonably we tried to speak, the angrier they got, and it was quite *literally* like dealing with a pack of *orangutans*! In the end we just walked away in disgust. It was quite clear those animals were just a law unto themselves. And y'know what's funny? Ever since then, we just refer to them as 'the animals upstairs', sort of like a relative of mine, who now has the moniker, 'Scumbag Ian'.

So, make it interesting! If you are asked about a boring topic, try, as a native speaker would, to *make it interesting*.

**Examiner:** Let's talk about dust.

**Speaker:** *Dust?* My kid's allergic to *dust*, you know – because of *dust* mites, which apparently are *everywhere*, so I have to *constantly* clean the apartment, which is a *real* drag, *particularly* since I don't come *home* till about 11 o'clock at *night*. And *then* you realise that *dust* is your worst enemy.

**Examiner:** Let's talk about toilet paper.

**Speaker:** Now that's weird, and pretty much something no one wants to talk about. But, you know, everyone throws that stuff down the toilet and never considers where it goes. I went once to the sewerage works in Melbourne, and it's actually interesting you know, when you see...

**Examiner:** Let's talk about the buzzing sound that lights can make.

**Speaker:** [*smiling*] Y'know, that immediately reminds me of a joke from 'The Simpsons', when Ned Flanders says that the buzzing is like the sound of angels, and [*using a silly voice*] 'How can you not like the sound of angels?' He also said, 'Don't you just love scratching mosquito bites.' As for me, I can't say that...

Now it is your turn.

## Exercise 43

### Part One: Time to Complain

A. Complaining is real, honest, heartfelt, and all this helps your fluency and pronunciation band score. And don't we all love doing it? And it can be interesting as well. Go for it!



You know what	<i>really</i> annoys me		?
	I <i>really</i> hate	about	[X]
The <i>worst</i> thing			is...
What I <i>really</i> don't like			
[X] =	the weather here	TV ads	my job/school
	the food here	travelling	learning English
	my [family member/relative]	politics here	this society I live in
	[a co-worker/friend]	my country	[anything you like!]

B. Remember those problems in the *past*? Put the previous speaking cues into *past* tense [annoyed/hated/didn't like/was], and keep complaining.

[X] =	my last job	[a place you visited when traveling]
	[an 'enemy' from high school]	[a relative (now dead)]
	[a movie you didn't like]	a past flat/house mate
	[a teacher from the past]	[anything you like (from the past)]

C. Wishing the Past Had Been Different.

Talking about *past problems*, we often wish the people involved (including ourselves) *had acted* differently at the time. Hey, one quarter of your speaking score is based on grammar, and I think I just used a *very* nice complex grammar. And it is based on *personal experiences*, a common theme in IELTS speaking. Now what was that grammar?

	Grammar	V3...	Function: Expressing...
I wish [X]	had (not)		Regrets
[X]	should have		Past Advice
[X]	could have		Past Possibilities

We all have had 1. problems, 2. difficult times, 3. bad decisions, 4. fights, and 5. unhappy periods in our lives. It is time to express regrets about them.

Let me give an example.

'Actually, I wish I hadn't studied engineering, particularly electrical engineering. It was a huge mistake. Basically, I'm a creative person, and working with great greasy machines at

electrical sub-stations was not my cup of tea at all, apart from which I was stuck in a god-awful crusty old government monopoly. I should have studied something more creative like... well, I don't know – computers, advertising, journalism, or something like that. I could have studied medicine, you know – my school marks were that good – but the trouble is, when you're 18 it's hard to know where your destiny lays...'

Well, there is an example with [X] = 'I'. Now, think of 1 to 5, and you try. Then change [X]. Go for it!

[X] =	my father	a friend I once knew
	my mother	a classmate from high school
	my brother/sister	[anyone you like (from the past)]

### Part Two: See the Good Side

There are good aspects to life, and people like hearing about them, too.

You know what	<i>really</i> pleases me			?
The <i>best</i> thing	I <i>really</i> like	about	[X]	
What I <i>really</i> like				is...

[X] =	the weather here	my job/school
	living here	learning English
	my country	life
	my mother/father	[anything you like!]

### Part Three: Extremes

Extremes of feeling are interesting because they are... extreme.

Think about the best and the worst. Express it with some real feeling.

- |                            |  |  |  |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| A. When did you last feel  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disappointed</li> <li>• embarrassed</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exhausted</li> <li>• insulted</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frustrated?</li> <li>• furious</li> </ul> |
| B. Tell me about something | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fascinating</li> <li>• disgusting</li> <li>• amazing</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• horrifying</li> <li>• disturbing</li> <li>• stunning</li> </ul> | that you have seen or heard about?   |

C. What do you think of

- politics and politicians
- cockroaches or worms
- pornographic films
- motor racing?
- skydiving
- horror movies

## Part Four: Find Something Interesting

Let's talk about...

- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. rotting fruit. | 7. shoelaces.           |
| 2. dog droppings. | 8. puddles of water.    |
| 3. sunlight.      | 9. mould.               |
| 4. being bored.   | 10. the number 'seven'. |
| 5. ink in pens.   | 11. crazy people.       |
| 6. eggs.          | 12. leaves.             |
13. food particles that are often swept into the corners of room.  
 14. those times that you really want to scream at your mother.  
 15. the most boring teacher that you had in high school.

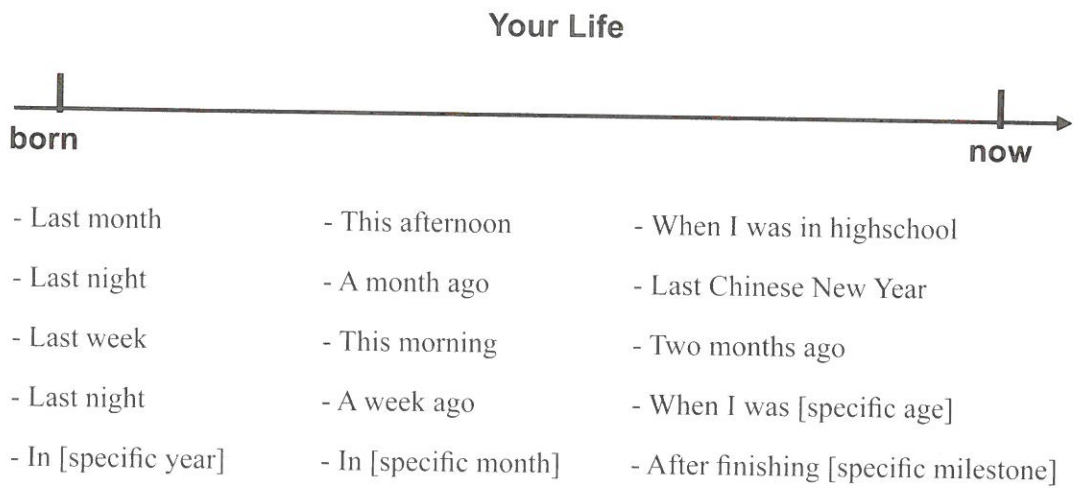
## Point E: Think of (Specific) Past Events

In Point D, we talked about the advantages of 'personalisation' or real life examples. In Tip 18, Hint 2: Find a Groove, we talked about the advantages of being specific. Thus, combining these two, specific past events are always useful and recommended. Interesting and unusual stories from your personal past are called 'anecdotes', and these are the most basic foundation of good speaking. Develop this skill.

In Point D of this tip, the anecdote began with, 'I remember one time though, ...' which is a good *general* past time reference. In Exercise 42, Speaker B began his anecdote with, 'Just last night ...' – a *specific* past time reference. Do you know other *specific* past time references? Go back to Tip 2, Exercise 4 to check, then do the following exercise.

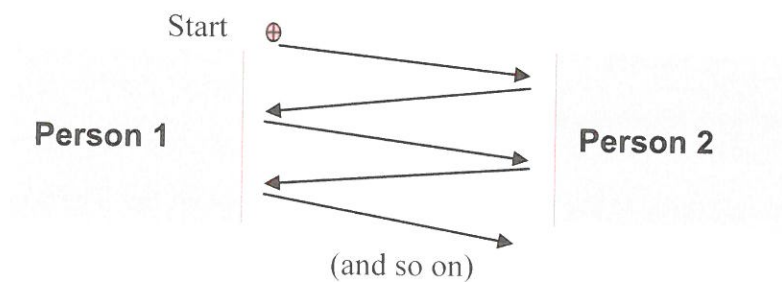
### Exercise 44

1. Try speaking for one minute, beginning with one of the following past time references. Try to say something as interesting as possible. 'Spin' a story. Give an anecdote. Use the other tips in this book to extend your speaking.
2. Pick another past time reference and speak again. Try some others. Try them all.



## Point F: Reflect the Question

A conversation between two people follows the pattern:



In other words, the speaking ‘ball’ is thrown from one person to the other, and then back again. This is why it is so important to use, as Tip 11 explained, a falling tone of voice, or, as Tip 15, Part Three explained, a statement to say that you have finished. In both of these, the examiner is cued to receive the ‘speaking ball’ back. This is known as ‘turn-taking’, and good speakers do this naturally.

Of course, the IELTS Speaking Test is not a conversation. It is a test, where *you* should do most of the talking. However, again, we can use the ‘native speaker’ rule, arguing that speaking which is similar to native speakers must be good – and native speakers, even under test conditions, would quite possibly ‘bounce’ a question back at the examiner. When done well, a good feeling of conversation is created, and it is *the most natural way* to ‘wind down’ your ‘turn’, and ‘cue’ the finish, which Tip 11 tells us is very important.

The reflected questions must be simple, ‘yes/no’ ones. Being ‘yes/no’ means the IELTS examiner can easily ‘bounce’ the speaking ‘ball’ back. So, let us look at a typical Speaking Part Three question and sample answer. A Part One question we looked at in Tip 8, Exercise 23 was, ‘Which do you prefer: cats or dogs?’ However, in Part Three, the question is more likely to be, ‘*Why* do

people have pets?’ – in other words, a deeper *impersonal* question, needing better English skills to answer. Combining Tip 8, 17, and Point F, gives a useful speaking procedure:

Question: Why do people have pets?	
<b>1. (Buy Time)</b> [eg. muse over the background; divide, ride]	Pets? Well, I've had a few of them in my life so I guess I can answer that. I guess basically it depends on the pet, and there can be many reasons.
<b>2. Answer</b>	An important one would be just for company; just to have another living thing around you...
<b>3. Say Why</b>	... because many people live alone these days, you know, separated, or divorced, or not married, or old, since their partners have died.
<b>4. Exemplify</b>	My mother lives alone, but she has two cats – Penny and Jojo – that keep her company. She feeds them, talks to them, pats them with her feet, and I'm sure they're a great comfort to her in her old age. Even <i>I</i> really loved those cats, and I remember how little Jojo as a kitten used to interrupt me all the time when I was studying – quite a little pest, actually, when I come to think about it.
<b>5. (Reflect Question)</b>	Have you ever had a pet?

Notice, the reflected question at the end is a simple ‘yes/no’ question. The examiner would give one of these answers [yes or no], and then the speaker, (having divided [Tip 10] by saying ‘it depends on the pet’), could continue:

<b>1. Other Side</b>	I guess there are other reasons, like in the case of dogs ...
<b>2. Answer</b>	... where protection, I suppose, is one of the most practical purposes of all.
<b>3. Say Why</b>	Dogs are very loyal, very territorial*, and <i>can</i> be trained, certainly unlike cats, of course. I think protection is <i>particularly</i> important now because there's a lot of burglaries* happening, and also attacks at night, and on people living by themselves.
<b>4. Exemplify</b>	Actually, I heard that some burglars, when they check out potential properties, deliberately stay clear of houses that have dogs. You know, I always remember someone telling me that the best burglar alarm you can have is a dog, and certainly if someone I know had had a dog, he'd never have been burgled – although, [smiling] frankly, he's such a weird, reclusive*, pathologically* miserly* human being that the poor burglars basically got nothing worth a damn from <i>his</i> house.
<b>5. (Reflect Question)</b>	Do you know what I mean?

## Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	territorial	(adj)	living alone and avoiding other people
2	burglary	(n)	caused by or connected with illness or disease
3	reclusive	(adj)	guarding and defending an area that you believe is your own
4	pathologically	(adv)	hating to spend money
5	miserly	(adj)	the crime of entering a building illegally and stealing things

The speaker could then ‘divide into sides’ [Tip 9] and give a specific interesting example from his life [this tip] by continuing:

<b>2. Answer</b>	Having said that, dogs cause <i>problems</i> , in fact, personally, I’m not keen on them at all – in fact, I can quite literally go into details about when I was attacked by a dog while jogging...
------------------	--

And so on. Remember, show ‘thinking’ body language [Tip 4, Part Three] as you buy time. All the tips are beginning to fit together. It is time to practise.

## Exercise 45

Try the following typical Speaking Part Three questions (of which the first twenty are based on the typical Speaking Part One questions in Tip 8). Reflect the question back at times. Remember, as Tips 9 and 10 explained, when you ‘2. Answer’, you can ‘divide’ if it is natural to do so. Exemplify from your general and specific past. Make it interesting. Be honest. Be natural. Do not think too much. Enjoy it if you can.

1. Do any colours in your culture have special meaning?
2. What are the advantages of cats over dogs, as pets?
3. Why do people have hobbies?
4. What jobs are likely to be popular in the future in your country?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working abroad?
6. Do you think society’s dependence on computers is good?
7. Why is leisure time important?

8. Are neighbours growing closer, or further apart, in your country?
9. Do you think young people are expected to study too much?
10. What are the advantages of eating out?
  
11. Is the quality of dentistry good or bad in your country?
12. Do you think children should learn a musical instrument?
13. Is life more pressured now than in the past?
14. What superstitions does your culture have?
15. Do you think school prepares students well for the workforce?
  
16. What festivals are important in your culture?
17. Do you think children should do housework/chores?
18. What problems can insects cause?
19. What are the (dis)advantages of having children?
20. Do you think your local government is efficient or not?
  
21. Do you think women are more emotional than men?
22. Have you noticed changing weather patterns in your country?
23. Were the library services good in your high school?
24. What measures can be done to reduce pollution?
25. What ethnic groups does your country have?
  
26. People seem to be very interested in celebrities. Why is this?
27. Do you think art museums are worth the money invested in them?
28. Why is it that so many people continue to smoke cigarettes?
29. Do you think foreign aid serves any real humanitarian purpose?
30. Do you think the world is becoming more, or less, politically stable?

Example answers to 10 of these questions are given in Appendix 4.

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

- ✎ **Summary of Tips**
- ✎ **Tip 20: The Speaking Procedure**
- ✎ **Summarising Exercise**
- ✎ **Practice Speaking Tests I-IV**



## Summary of Tips

We can now summarise what we have learned for the IELTS Speaking Test. Although these tips are divided into Parts One, Two, and Three, many of them ‘overlap’ and should be used for all parts.

### General

<b>Tip 1</b> (The basis of good speaking)	We tried to relax, be natural, and be honest, realising that this is the basis of good speaking and pronunciation. We practised using stress to put a beat to our talking.
<b>Tip 2</b> (Some useful grammar)	We became familiar with, and practised, the grammar in this tip.
<b>Tip 3</b> (Topic-ise your life)	We practised our speaking by talking for a short time about the topics we met in our everyday life. We practised using stress to choose, change, correct, and clarify subjects.
<b>Tip 4</b> (Respond to the situation)	In response to the situation, we showed interest, emotion, and informality in our speaking, but acted and spoke appropriately to a test situation. We were also aware of how body language could support our words or ‘thinking’ silences.
<b>Tip 5</b> (Respond to the culture)	In response to the culture, we were honest, open, and natural in our speaking, avoiding any ‘memorisation’ approaches.
<b>Tip 6</b> (About discourse markers)	We became familiar with, and practised, some discourse markers, always remembering to try to use them naturally. We tried to use good words, but appropriate to the informal situation, and not to the point that it affected our fluency.
<b>Tip 7</b> (About words)	When we did not know the word for an object or concept, we used other words to describe it – that is, we paraphrased, but not to the point that it took over the answer.

## Part One: The Interview

<p><b>Tip 8</b> (Say why, exemplify [and stop])</p>	<p>When asked questions, we made our answers longer by giving the reasons for our opinions, by generally elaborating, and/or by specifically exemplifying – but stopping when we had run out of relevant thoughts.</p>
<p><b>Tip 9</b> (Divide into sides)</p>	<p>When asked about our likes and dislikes, if we did not have a clear opinion, we divided our answer into the good and bad aspects, and then discussed both – or, if having a clear opinion, we gave (and exemplified) an answer, but then discussed the ‘other’ side.</p>
<p><b>Tip 10</b> (Divide and ride)</p>	<p>For complicated questions, we divided our answers into two (or more) contrasting aspects, and then discussed them.</p>
<p><b>Tip 11</b> (Cue through, wind down, cue due)</p>	<p>When the examiner introduced or ‘bridged’ to a new subject, we ‘cued through’ with a response.</p> <p>We did not talk on and on. We answered the question, extended and exemplified the answer, and then stopped.</p> <p>When we finished our answer, we ‘cued’ the examiner (by word stress, tone of voice, and pausing), so that the examiner knew to ask the next question.</p>

## Part Two: The Long Turn

<p><b>Tip 12</b> (Thinking)</p>	<p>Before writing down notes, we thought carefully about which subject would be better, more interesting, and easier to talk about. We considered whether to just think (and not take notes).</p>
<p><b>Tip 13</b> (Note-taking)</p>	<p>If taking notes, we could structure them in OCOE ‘story-telling’ parts: <b>O</b>rientation, <b>C</b>haracters/Plots, <b>O</b>utcome, and <b>E</b>valuation.</p>
<p><b>Tip 14</b> (Getting started)</p>	<p>We could anticipate the length of the Long Turn [two minutes] by using a watch.</p> <p>We began the Long Turn by introducing first the general and then the specific subject.</p>

**Tip 15**  
(Getting through it)

If we were not sure about our speaking ability, in order to help organise our answer, we thought about:

1. using the OCOE story-telling approach.
2. re-phrasing the speaking cues into questions to ourselves.
3. narrating some events chronologically (in order of time).

As with Tip 11, we cued the end to our answer, this time by simply stating that we had finished. We could also do this by anticipating the two-minute end point of the Long Turn.

**Tip 16**  
(More about Tones)

We 'cued' each 'block' of speech with rising and falling tones, and also did this for sentences inside the blocks.

## Part Three: The Discussion

**Tip 17**  
(Buy time)

When asked difficult questions, we did not try to immediately answer, but instead gained some time by giving our first thoughts, musings, or reactions. We also did this in mid-answer to help organise our thoughts.

**Tip 18**  
(Move to a groove)

If the examiner asked difficult or surprising questions that we did not know the answer to, we asked for more information, or for the examiner to make it clearer.

We tried to then begin with specific answers (even if they were not 'correct') since we needed specific beginnings in order to extend and exemplify.

**Tip 19**  
(Want to do it!)

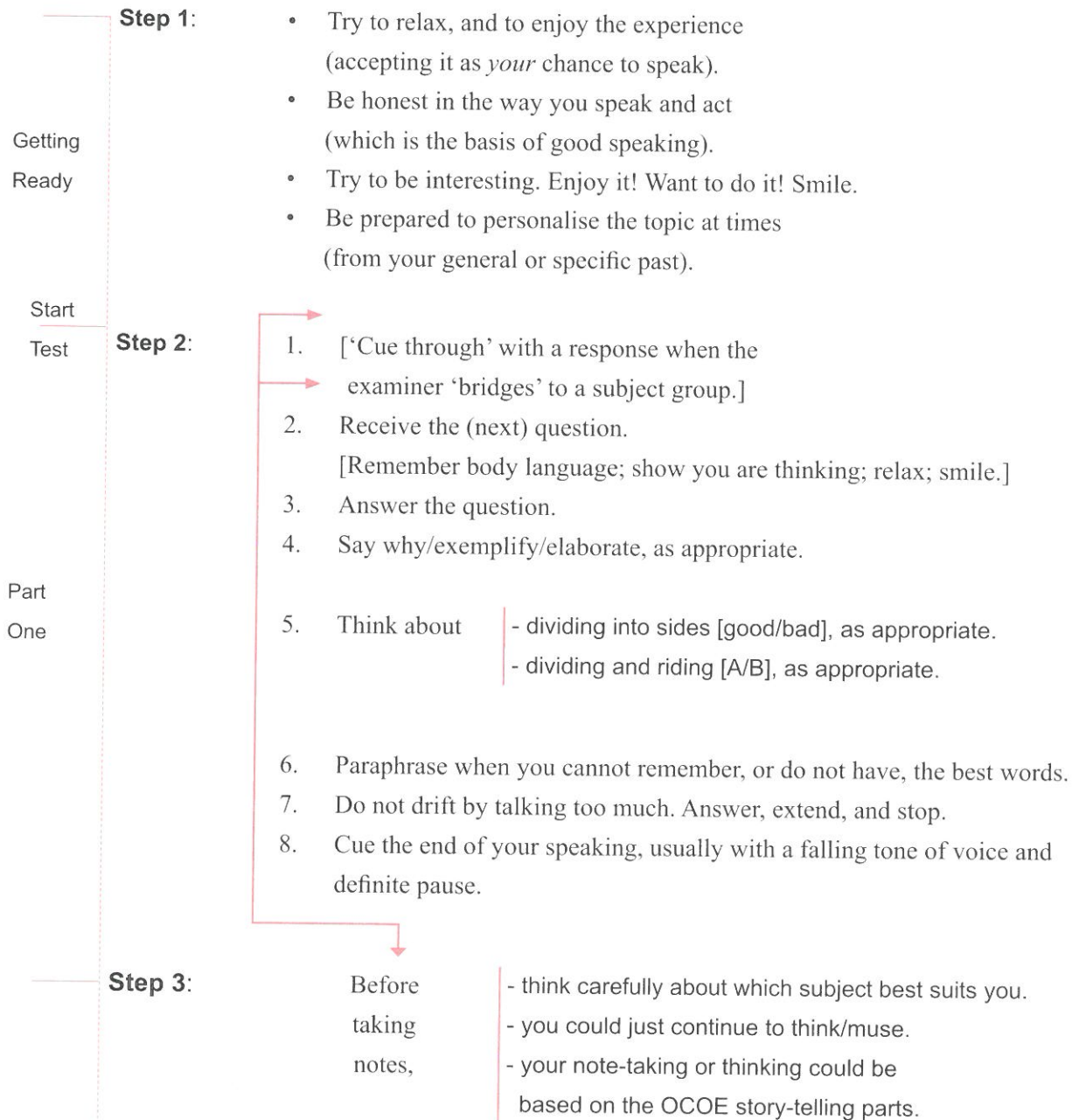
We realised that the test was a chance to express our thoughts on issues, and so we welcomed and *enjoyed* the opportunity to do so.

Naturally then, we tried to select interesting elements from our past (both generally and specifically), and then, possibly, reflected a yes/no question back in order to involve the examiner in the conversation.

# Tip 20

## The Speaking Procedure

Combining all the tips we have learned suggests the following procedure for the IELTS Speaking Test.



Part Two	<p><b>Step 4:</b> Note the starting time/Know when you must finish.</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> Give a general and specific introduction to the topic.</p> <p><b>Step 6:</b> You could use the:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- four cues by asking yourself the questions.</li> <li>- four-part OCOE 'story-telling' approach.</li> </ul> <p>Remember to cue the start and finish of each block with the features of pronunciation discussed in Tip 16.</p> <p><b>Step 7:</b> If you finish before the two minutes is up, <i>say</i> that you have finished.</p> </p>
Part Three	<p><b>Step 8:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Receive the (next) question.</li> <li>2. Buy some time, if you need to and it is natural.</li> <li>3. Answer the question, trying for specificity (and then say why and exemplify).</li> <li>4. Buy time in mid-answer if it helps.</li> <li>5. Think about:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- dividing into sides [good/bad], as appropriate.</li> <li>- dividing and riding [A/B], as appropriate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Paraphrase when you cannot remember, or do not have, the best words.</li> <li>7. Do not drift by talking too much. Answer, extend, give anecdotes, and stop.</li> </ol>
End Test	<p><b>Step 9:</b> Cue the end of your speaking. This could be done by reflecting a 'yes/no' question.</p>
End Event	<p><b>Step 10:</b> Thank the examiner, and quickly and quietly leave.</p>

Remember, it is good to be aware of, and follow, a procedure, but this does not mean it is easy – in fact, there is so much advice here that we will look at one more exercise, but it is a long exercise, and it will summarise and give good practice for every tip we have learned.

# Summarising Exercise

Let us pretend we are beginning an IELTS Speaking Test. Let us do it together. All the actual speaking is shown in 'quotation marks'. The IELTS examiner's words are shown in **bold** type, and our words will be shown in **bold** and *italic* type, like *this*. Words that carry strong stress will be underlined. Incidentally, for this test, I will put myself in my hometown in Australia.

## Part One of the Speaking Test: The Interview

The examiner begins by exchanging names, then checking your identification. Then the examiner will say:

'Now, in this first part, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself.'

### Task 1

Remember Tip 1

**Tip 1**  
(Relax, speak, speak up)

Try to relax, be natural, and be honest. Realise that this is the basis of good speaking and pronunciation.

Practise using stress to put a natural beat to your speaking.

'**Let's talk about cars...**'

Quickly. Remember the first part of Tip 11.

**Tip 11**  
[First Part]  
(Cue through, wind down,  
cue due)

When the examiner introduces or 'bridges' to a new subject, 'cue through' with a response.

'**Sure. I actually own a car.**'

'**How often do you travel by car or taxi?**'

'**Actually, I travel quite regularly by car.**'

I used ‘actually’, since I felt these answers were slightly surprising. Did I use a beat, as the second part of Tip 1 suggests? I think so, which is good – but all this thinking about ‘beats’ has made me stop talking. Remember Tip 8.

<p><b>Tip 8</b> (Answer, say why, exemplify [and stop])</p>	<p>When asked questions, make your answers longer by giving the reasons for your opinion, by generally elaborating, and/or specifically exemplifying – but stopping when you have run out of relevant thoughts.</p>
---	---

***‘Umm, despite owning one, I still take the train to work Monday to Friday, but, for example, every Saturday and Sunday, I drive to shopping centres, restaurants, or sometimes into the mountains for a Devonshire tea...’***

Well, I spoke with a beat then, but I didn’t cue a finish to that question. I actually raised my tone as if to continue, and the examiner is waiting. I must remember the third part of Tip 11.

<p><b>Tip 11</b> [Third Part] (Cue through, wind down, cue due)</p>	<p>When finishing the answer, ‘cue’ the examiner (by word stress, tone of voice, and pausing), so that the examiner knows to begin the next question.</p>
---	---

***‘So, yeah, I drive a car regularly.’***

So, that was a short informal concluding statement, with a falling tone to signal this.

**Task**

**2**

Answer the first question on cars (as I have just done), and then answer the examiner’s further two questions.

1. **‘Do you think there are too many cars on the road?’**
2. **‘What are the advantages of taking public transport?’**

The examiner now continues:

**‘Is the road system in your country very good?’**  
**‘Gee? Uh, what’s your opinion...’**

Oops. I must remember Tip 4.

<p><b>Tip 4</b> [First Part] (Respond to the situation)</p>	<p>In response to the situation, show interest, emotion, and informality in your speaking, but act and speak appropriately to a test situation.</p>
---	---

This is a test, and I know the examiner *cannot* answer questions such as the one I just asked. Let us ‘back track’; let us buy time [Tip 17] with some honest thoughts, stating the implication.

***‘Sorry. I mean it’s difficult to give a simple answer to that one, since the road system has both good and bad aspects.’***

I used the second part of Tip 4 to make this sentence more effective.

<p><b>Tip 4</b> [Second Part] (Respond to the situation)</p>	<p>Also be aware of how body language can support your words, and ‘thinking’ silences.</p>
--	--

I held my left hand in front of me, ‘cutting’ the air on the left [‘has both good’], then on the right [‘and bad aspects’]. Body language helped give the message, and helped me speak. Similarly, my hand is now ‘drifting’ and my lips are pursed, giving the message that I am searching for *thoughts*, not *English*. I have no clear answer to this, and it is related to my likes and dislikes, and the comment ‘good and bad’ has already reminded me about the ‘dividing’ tips.

<p><b>Tip 9</b> (Divide into sides)</p>	<p>When asked about likes and dislikes, if you do not have a clear opinion, you can divide the answer into the good and bad aspects, and then discuss both – or, if you have a clear opinion, give (and exemplify) an answer, but then discuss the ‘other’ side.</p>
<p><b>Tip 10</b> (Divide and ride)</p>	<p>For complicated questions, you can divide the answer into two (or more) contrasting aspects, and then discuss them.</p>

So, let us divide into sides. *My* answer would be:

***‘On the whole, I’d say the road system is good, despite some problems. I mean, my country is a huge continent\* with a small population, relatively speaking, so it’s quite impressive that we have a pretty good highway and freeway system circumnavigating\* the country, and dissecting\* it along the north-south, and east-west plane, and I can certainly speak with some authority on this, having spent a year on a motorbike riding all around the country...’***



## Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	continent	(n)	to cut apart (an animal body, plant, etc.)
2	to circumnavigate	(v)	one of the main landmasses of the earth
3	to dissect	(v)	to travel around; make the circuit of by navigation

I deliberately raised my tone at the end, because I intend to keep talking. The examiner is waiting. I need to give the ‘other side’. Here I could think about Tip 6 and discourse markers.

<b>Tip 6</b> (About discourse markers’)	Become familiar with, and practise, some discourse markers, always remembering to try to use them naturally.
--	--

Since I am about to look at the other side, I could now use ‘on the other hand’, which sounds natural enough, with a few sentence adverbs.

*‘On the other hand, we have a road toll\* of... well, I’m not sure exactly what the figure is, but, basically, it’s very high, and some of those accidents are undoubtedly because of bad road design. I remember one where a whole family was wiped out\*, and, as explained in the newspapers, the road design was, y’know, the proverbial\* accident waiting to happen. So, imagine that – a whole family: husband, wife, three kids – bang! Gone! Just like that!’*

## Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	toll	(n)	according to a proverb or saying
2	to wipe out	(v)	the extent of loss/damage resulting from some action or event
3	proverbial	(adj)	to destroy or remove something completely

I could have continued, dividing and riding, but the answer is complete enough, and the examiner has other questions to ask, and as the second part of Tip 11 tells us, good speakers do not talk endlessly, and as the third part of Tip 11 tells us, I allowed my tone to fall at the end, put stress on the final word, stopped speaking, and looked expectantly at the examiner. The examiner continues:

**‘Now, let’s talk about your home town.’**

Remember Tip 11, Hint 1?

**‘Fine by me.’**

**‘What kind of place is it?’**

Here we go with another set of questions on a different subject. I know immediately what to say as a reply because the subject is very familiar to me, but should I first ‘waste’ time. I could say, ‘That’s a highly interesting topic, about which many people openly debate’ because that book, ‘Automatic IELTS’ by Joe Makemoney, told me to say this – but the examiner’s question is *not* interesting at all, and *nobody* has ever debated it, so how can that be a good comment to make? I could say, ‘Thank you sir for giving me the opportunity to talk about this’, as advised by Professor Gei Woh Chen on the Internet. My friend told me that that Professor knows everything, coming as he does from the University of Gee Nio Nai.

But why am I trying to use memorised junk? Why do I trust these people’s advice about this important event? Why can I not just *honestly answer the question*? I must remember Tip 5.

<b>Tip 5</b> (Respond to the culture)	In response to the culture, be honest, open, and natural in your speaking, avoiding any ‘memorisation’ approaches.
--	--

Let me answer the question first, and since I *can* answer straight away, I *will*, since I am an *honest* speaker, and Tip 5 is good advice.

*‘I grew up in Nunawading, a suburb\* of Melbourne. Talking about the suburb, it was a fairly typical middle-class place, and very new at that time because it was just being built on re-claimed apple-orchards\*. You only had to see the amount of vacant land, open creek\* beds, small green belts\*, and so on all around, and even today, incidentally, there’s still a little residual\* orchard land, and the odd fruit tree here and there – a vestige\* of a time once past. Incidentally, I feel sad when I visit Nunawading now, because all the old vacant land and creek beds of my youth have been sealed over, and are now chock’a’block\* with ugly looking apartments.’*

### Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>suburb</b>	(n)	[slang] full of; crowded with
2	<b>orchard</b>	(n)	a district lying outside a city centre; a small community

3	creek	(n)	an area of park or open land surrounding a community
4	green belt	(n)	a small stream
5	residual	(adj)	an area of land on which fruit trees are grown
6	vestige	(n)	relating to residue, or remainder, or what is left over
7	chock-a-block	(adj)	visible evidence of something that is no longer present

**Task**  
3

Answer the first question on your home town (as I have just done), and then answer the examiner's further three questions, always remembering the Part One Tips: 8, 9, 10, and 11.

1. 'What's the most interesting part of your town?'
2. 'What kind of jobs do the people do there?'
3. 'Would you say it's a good place to live?'

The examiner now continues:

**'Let's move on to talk about accommodation.'**

**'Sure.'** [Tip 11, Hint 1].

**'Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in?'**

Here we go with another round of questions on a different subject. Let me answer first, buying some time (with some *honest* musing [Tip 17] which gives a reason [Tip 8]).

*'I suppose I can do that, particularly since I've just recently purchased my place. I live in a small unit and it's okay... I mean, although it's small, it's cosy and nice. It's certainly easy enough to clean, and I know this because every Sunday afternoon I do all the cleaning myself. The drawback is that with only two bedrooms and a baby in the place, it can get rather cramped.'*

**Task**  
4

Answer the first question on your accommodation (as I have just done), and then answer the examiner's further three questions.

1. 'How long have you lived there?'
2. 'What do you like about living there?'
3. 'What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in?'

## Part Two of the Speaking Test: The Long Turn

Now the examiner takes out the booklet opened to the Long Turn page, and says:

**'Now I'm going to give you a topic, and I'd like you to talk about it for one to two minutes.'**

**'Okay.'**

The examiner explains that we have one minute to think about what we are going to say, and can make some notes to help us if we wish. Then we get the topic.

**Describe something you own which is very important to you.**

You should say:

- where you got it from
- how long you have had it
- what you use it for

and explain why it is important to you.

Remember Tip 12.

**Tip 12**  
(Thinking)

Before writing down notes, think carefully about which subject would be better, more interesting, and easier to talk about. Consider whether to just think (and not take notes).

**Task**  
5

1. Think about three possible subjects; that is, three different objects you own which are important to you.

2. Think about which one would allow you to speak best.
3. Think about which one you really *want* to speak about.
4. Then, think about whether you want to take notes, or just keep thinking.

Let us look at the note-taking tip.

<p><b>Tip 13</b> (Note-taking)</p>	<p>If taking notes, you could structure them in the OCOE 'story-telling' parts: Orientation, Characters/Plots, Outcome, and Evaluation.</p>
--	---

**Task**  
**6**

Try taking notes (or try just thinking) according to this tip. See if it leads to more natural story-telling, and perhaps better speaking. Fill in the following table.

<p><b>Orientation</b> What object? When? Where?</p>	
<p><b>Characters/Plot</b> Who? What people? What happened?</p>	
<p><b>Outcome</b> How did it end?</p>	
<p><b>Evaluation</b> How do you feel now? In what way? Why?</p>	

**'Alright?'**

**'Sure, I'm ready.'**

**'Remember, you have one to two minutes for this so don't worry if I stop you. I'll tell you when the time is up.'**

**'No problem.'**

We should also remember the first part of Tip 14.

<p><b>Tip 14</b> [First Part] (Getting started)</p>	<p>You could anticipate the length of the Long Turn [two minutes] by using a watch.</p>
---	---

I am looking at my watch now, ready to note the time when the examiner says 'go'.

**'Can you start speaking now, please?'**

Now I must remember the other 'Long Turn' tips.

<p><b>Tip 14</b> [Second Part] (Getting started)</p>	<p>Begin the Long Turn by introducing first the general and then the specific subject.</p>
<p><b>Tip 15</b> (Getting through it)</p>	<p>If not sure about your speaking ability, in order to help organise your answer, think about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. using the OCOE story-telling approach.</li> <li>2. re-phrasing the speaking cues into questions to yourself.</li> <li>3. narrating some events chronologically (in order of time).</li> </ol> <p>As with Tip 11, cue the end to your answer, this time by simply stating that you have finished. You could also do this by anticipating the two-minute end point of the Long Turn.</p>
<p><b>Tip 16</b> (More about pronunciation)</p>	<p>'Cue' each 'block' of speech with rising and falling tones, and also do this for sentences inside the blocks.</p>

**Task**  
7

This time *you* can go first. Try doing the Individual Long Turn, then compare it to my two example answers in Appendix 5. Remember to try to cue the start and finish of each subject block using the features of pronunciation discussed in Tip 16.

The examiner now asks some 'rounding off' questions, which you can answer now.

**'Is this thing which you own valuable in terms of money?'**

**'Would it be easy to replace?'**

## Part Three of the Speaking Test: The Discussion

The examiner begins by bridging:

**'We've been talking about something you own which is important to you, and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions related to this.'**

**'Go ahead.'** [Tip 11, Hint 1].

**'So, let's consider first of all, how people's values have changed. What kind of things give status to people in your country?'**

Status? Are you sure you know what it means? Remember the first part of Tip 18.

**Tip 18**  
[First Part]  
(Move to a groove)

If the examiner asks difficult or surprising questions which you do not know the answer to, ask for more information, or for the examiner to make it clearer.

**'What do you mean by "status"?''**

**'Status. Things that impress people.'**

Okay, 'things that impress people', but it is still a difficult question. We can think a little, but let us not just sit silently for too long. Remember Tip 17. We have actually used it already in Part One when we were asked that difficult question about the road system in our country.

**Tip 17**  
(Buy time)

When asked difficult questions, do not try to immediately answer, but instead gain some time by giving your first thoughts, musings, or reactions. You can also do this in mid-answer to help organise your thoughts.

**'I guess there are many things that impress people, and, I guess... all things considered... it varies from person to person...'**

That is a good start, expressing the divisions, and it is all *honest* and *true*.

**'So, what then impresses me the most in other people?'**

A rhetorical question – a good technique to buy some more time, and help you think. My body language [rubbing my chin and looking into the distance – Tip 4, Part Three] also shows I am thinking about the answer (and not the words). Now remember Tip 19.

**Tip 19**

(Want to Do it!)

Realise that the test is a chance to express your thoughts on issues, and so welcome and enjoy the opportunity to do so.

Naturally then, try to select interesting elements from your past (both generally and specifically), and then, possibly, reflect a yes/no question back in order to involve the examiner in the conversation.

I have already ‘bought’ some time, and my body language was good, but why am I hesitating. Enjoy it. Go personal.

[smiling] ***‘Well, having a plush\* new BMW with my girlfriend sitting beside me would probably impress some people, but surprisingly, that’s not something I personally aspire\* to achieve, bookworm that I am...’***

This is becoming fun, and my speaking is reflecting this, with natural stress and tones, a genuine flow, and now other ideas are coming. My own personality is emerging. This isn’t a test at all; it’s just a casual chat. It’s not that hard actually, when you begin to enjoy it.

***‘But the trouble is, to get that car and all that comes with it, you need the money in the first place – money which I certainly don’t have, and am not likely to, either. So I’d say just having a lot of money impresses people – and all the accessories\* of wealth and privilege that come with it. And you know what’s particularly apparent\* now, in my country?’***

**‘No. What?’**

***‘Owning a big house! You see, if you have a big, or even better, a huge house, people think you’re rich, even if you aren’t, and I really think this reflects the growing worship of money, the... y’know, shallow materialism\* in our society.’***

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	plush	(adj)
2	to aspire	(v)
3	accessories	(n)
4	apparent	(adj)
5	materialism	(n)

obvious; easy to see or understand
comfortable, expensive, or of good quality
extra equipment that is useful but not necessary
with emphasis on material objects, comforts, and considerations
to aim or seek for something great or of high value



Uh oh, right now, I don't know how to continue. I want to exemplify, but I cannot think of the best example. I need to buy some time in mid-answer.

***'Umm, you know, it's probably the same in all cultures... because human nature is the same everywhere, wouldn't you say?'***

That was a reflected question, and the examiner has nodded his head. Now I remember the example – the new houses in Melbourne.

***'You only have to look at all the houses being built on new housing estates around Melbourne. You'll see that most of them are huge... huge...'***

Now what is that really good word to describe a big, solid, single block. 'Mono'-something. It is 'monolithic'?

***'... mono... mono...'***

Uh-oh, I am hesitating. Remember Tip 7.

**Tip 7**  
[Second Part]  
(About words)

When you do not know the word for an object or concept, use other words to describe it – that is, paraphrase, but not to the point that it takes over the answer.

***'... you know, those huge, big, solid, single blocks. They're usually double-storey with little architectural style whatsoever, but apparently that's what the market is after – McMansions, as they're sometimes called. Pseu... pseu...'***

Uh-oh, now I have stopped completely. I need some hedges [Tip 17, Hint 2].

***'... sort of... like...'***

I am looking 'thoughtful' (although I am feeling confused). Maybe I should remember the first part of Tip 7?

**Tip 7**  
[First Part]  
(About words)

Try to use good words, but appropriate to the informal situation, and not to the point that it affects fluency.

Why do I not just forget about the word 'pseudo'\*? It is a nice word, but I have other words I can use that are also nice. I need to move on.

*'... well, you know, horribly pretentious\* places, aspiring\* to a class of existence that the owners almost certainly don't have, being mortgaged\*, I'm sure, up to their eyeballs. Ah, up to their eyeballs, I'm sure, since they have debt...'*

Wait a minute. I have answered the question very well, and enjoyed it the whole time. I may begin drifting here. Remember the second part of Tip 11.

<b>Tip 7</b>	
[Second Part]	
(Cue through, wind down, cue due)	Do not talk on and on. Answer the question, extend and exemplify your answer, then stop.

I can use Tip 19's reflected question technique to finish.

*'... but they still want to live in those places. Have you seen these sorts of houses? Do you know what I mean?'*

### Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>pseudo-</b>	(prefix)	to aim or seek for something great or of high value
2	<b>pretentious</b>	(adj)	to have property held as security for a loan
3	<b>to aspire</b>	(v)	looking like, but not actually being something; pretended
4	<b>mortgaged</b>	(adj)	not genuine; false or pretended

I could now 'divide into sides' [Tip 9], talking about the *good* side of large houses, or I could 'divide and ride' [Tip 10], talking about the aspects that impress country people [such as big farms] compared to *other* things that impress city people [such as big *cars*], but I have said enough, so I ended with a rising tone (since it was a yes/no question), a slight stress on the last word, and an expectant look. The examiner has been cued. He has nodded his head, and now continues.

**'How have things changed since your parents' time?'**

**'Do you mean with respect to status?'**

That was Tip 18, asking for clarification.

**'Yes.'**

**'Hmmm ...'**

That was Tip 17 – a thinking noise.

**‘Well, my parents had a nice house... and a garden... and pets...’**

Uh-oh. I am not starting *specifically*. Remember the second part of Tip 18.

**Tip 18**

[Second Part]  
(Move to a groove)

Try to then begin with specific answers (even if they are not ‘correct’) since you need specific beginnings in order to extend and exemplify.

Well, I am not sure what the answer is, so I will just guess. I will be very specific so that I can then use other tips.

**‘Well, actually, I don’t think it’s changed much at all. I mean, in my parents’ time – say, the 1950s and 60s – I know that people shared the same aspirations\*. Having your own house has been called the “Australian dream” and it may well be deeply rooted\* in our psyche\*, maybe because of historical reasons, since, as you know, my country began as... y’know... a collection of dispossessed\* dislocated\* people: immigrants, settlers, or, if you go back far enough, convicts\*, and itinerants\*, swagmen\* and seasonal workers, and so on. Mind you, there’s nothing wrong with that dream at all. As a matter of fact, I share it myself.’**

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	aspiration	(n)	fixed in one place; not moving or changing
2	rooted	(adj)	taken out of, or away from, its normal position
3	psyche	(n)	a homeless person, travelling from place to place for work
4	dispossessed	(adj)	the mind; the deepest feelings and attitudes
5	dislocated	(adj)	a person found guilty of a crime and sent to prison
6	convict	(n)	a man who travels around looking for work
7	itinerant	(n)	having property, land, or houses taken away
8	swagman	(n)	a strong desire to have or do something

I can ‘divide and ride’ [Tip 10], dividing from *recent* history into *distant* history.

*'If you go a long way back, status probably was less about having a house, and more about having land.'*

Notice the use of stress for clarification/emphasis. That will help my pronunciation score [See Tip 3, Hint 2].

*'My country, as you might know, began as an agricultural community – where wealth was based on land ownership, rather than residential\* dimensions\*. Land and livestock\* showed your status in those times – “to be spacious in the possession of dirt”, to quote Shakespeare, or to quote myself, to be ankle deep in manure.\* [smiling] Only when they can toilet train cows will I ever be interested in farms. You see, I've visited a few of them before, and as far as I'm concerned, the farmers are welcome to them, flyblown\* stinking places that they are.'*

I have rambled a bit – so maybe I will use Tip 6, Part Two, and make a more specific concluding statement.

*'Anyway, to answer your question, no, I don't think status values have changed at all since my parents' time. Maybe it's all just a universal product of human nature.'*

## Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	residential	(adj)	the waste matter from animals
2	dimensions	(n)	very dirty and in bad condition; attracting flies
3	livestock	(n)	consisting of, or relating to, houses (rather than factories)
4	manure	(n)	the size, extent, or exact measurements
5	flyblown	(adj)	the animals kept on a farm

### Task

8

Answer the original two questions on status (as I have just done), and then answer (at length, using all the relevant tips) the examiner's further questions. Then take a look at some of my answers in Appendix 6.

1. 'Do you think people are generally more materialistic these days?'
2. 'Are there any trends in your country towards non-materialistic values, such as respect

for the environment, or simpler living?'

3. 'Let's talk about the role of advertising.' [Hint: that is a bridge] 'Do you think advertising influences what people buy?'
4. 'Is advertising a force for good, or for bad?'
5. 'What are the ingredients of a successful television advertisement?'

# Practice Speaking Tests I – IV

Here are four practice IELTS Speaking Tests (I to IV). All the words, apart from those in a dotted box  , are the IELTS examiner speaking to *you*. Answer all the questions, trying to follow the tips in this book.

## Practice Test I

Hello, my name is Examiner's name.

Can you tell me your full name, please?

Can I see your identification, please?

Thank you.

Now, in this first part, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself.

Test  
introduction,  
which begins  
every test

### Part One

Why don't we talk about the people in your hometown?

Are the people friendly? In what way?

Do the people often eat in restaurants? Why (not)?

Is there much disagreement among them? Why?

Let's move on to talk about exercise.

How often do you exercise? Why?

Are there difficulties when exercising? What?

What are the best forms of exercise?

Let's talk about stress.

Do you sometimes feel stress? In what situations?

What problems does this stress cause?

What do you do when you are very stressed?

Do you think life is generally stressful?

## Part Two

Now I'm going to give you a topic, and I'd like you to talk about it for one to two minutes. Before you talk, you'll have one minute to think about what you're going to say. You can make some notes if you wish. Do you understand? Here's some paper and a pencil, for making notes, and here's your topic. I'd like you to...

Part Two introduction, which begins every Part Two speaking

**Describe a time when you achieved something important.**

You should talk about:

- where and when this happened
- how you prepared for this time
- how you felt about it

and how it influenced or affected your life afterwards.

One minute for note taking:

All right? Remember you have one to two minutes for this, so don't worry if I stop you. I'll tell you when the time is up. Can you start speaking now, please?

Do the Long Turn, and finish before, or at, the two minute mark.

Thank you.

Did you tell other people about this time?

Thank you. Can you give me back the topic and the paper and pencil, please.

## Part Three

We've been talking about a time when you [Part Two Topic], and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions related to this. So, let's consider first of all:

Part Three introduction, which begins every Part Three speaking

### Individual Wealth

Are there many wealthy people in your country?

How did they become so wealthy?

If you were wealthy, how would your life change?

Can wealth sometimes lead to unhappiness? How?

**Success in Life**

What sort of achievements do people consider a success? Why?  
 What qualities do people need to succeed?  
 Do you think success is the most important thing? Why (not)?  
 In what situations can trying for success be bad?

**Problems Hindering Success**

What problems can sometimes prevent success?  
 Do you think parents are always helpful in this respect?  
 Does your society truly respect successful people?  
 Do you think society is too competitive?

Thank you for coming. That is the end of the speaking test.

**Practice Test II**

Speaking Test Introduction

... leading to...

**Part One**

Why don't we talk about your present situation?

What exactly are you doing now for work or study?  
 Are you happy with this?  
 What problems are you facing?

Let's move on to talk about neighbours.

Do you know much about your neighbours? Why (not)?  
 How often do you talk to them? Why (not)?  
 Can you describe, in general, a bad neighbour?

Let's talk about relaxation.

What do you do in order to relax?  
 Do you have enough time to relax? Why (not)?  
 Is relaxation important to you? Why (not)?  
 Do you think there is enough relaxation in life?



## Part Two

Part Two Introduction

... leading to...

**Describe an important building that you have visited.**

You should talk about:

- how it is important
- what it looks like
- its inside features and purposes

and anything you know of the history of this building.

One minute for note taking:

All right? Remember you have one to two minutes for this, so don't worry if I stop you. I'll tell you when the time is up. Can you start speaking now, please?

Do the Long Turn, and finish before, or at, the two minute mark.

Thank you.

Do you think you will visit this building again?

Thank you. Can you give me back the topic and the pencil and paper, please.

## Part Three

Part Three Introduction

... leading to...

### Construction

Is there much new construction going on in your area? What sort?  
What problems can this construction cause?  
Do you think working in the construction industry is a good job? Why (not)?  
Which sort of people carry out most of this construction? Why?

### Home Buildings

What sort of buildings do people usually live in?  
Do rich people live in different sorts of buildings? What sort?  
Are the new buildings different now from the older ones? In what way?  
Do you like these buildings?

**Traditional Buildings**

- Are there many traditional buildings in your country? Why (not)?
- Are people generally interested in traditional buildings? Why (not)?
- Why are traditional buildings sometimes knocked down?
- How can we make people more interested in traditional buildings?

Thank you for coming. That is the end of the speaking test.

**Practice Test III**

Speaking Test Introduction

... leading to...

**Part One**

Why don't we talk about the food in your hometown?

- Do you like the food in your hometown?
- Is it different in any way from other parts of your country?
- What factors have influenced it?

Let's move on to talk about television.

- How often do you watch television? Why?
- What programs do you watch? Why?
- Is the quality of these programs good or bad?

Let's talk about traffic.

- Is there much traffic in the cities here?
- Does it cause you any problems?
- Does your family have a car? Why (not)?
- Do you like riding in cars?

**Part Two**

Part Two Introduction

... leading to...

**Describe an exciting or dangerous event that you experienced.**

You should talk about:

- who else was involved
- what happened
- why it was exciting/dangerous

and whether you would recommend this for other people.

One minute for note taking:

All right? Remember you have one to two minutes for this, so don't worry if I stop you. I'll tell you when the time is up. Can you start speaking now, please?

Do the Long Turn, and finish before, or at, the two minute mark.

Thank you.

Have you told many people about this?

Thank you. Can you give me back the topic and the pencil and paper, please.

## Part Three

Part Three Introduction

... leading to...

### Extreme Sports/Activities

What sort of dangerous sports/activities are there?

In what way are they dangerous?

Do you think women also like these sports/activities?

Why do people risk their lives in these ways?

### Excitement in Life

Do you think life is exciting? Why (not)?

How do people make their lives more exciting?

Is having some excitement important? Why (not)?

At what point does excitement become dangerous?

### Bravery

How is bravery usually shown or demonstrated?

Do you think men are always braver than women?

Do you think showing bravery is always good? Why (not)?

What, in your view, defines true bravery?

Thank you for coming. That is the end of the speaking test.

## Practice Test IV

Speaking Test Introduction

... leading to...

### Part One

Why don't we talk about your high school studies?

Did you like your high school? In what way?

Did you have any problems there?

Were the teachers good? In what way?

Let's move on to talk about insects.

What sort of insects do you sometimes find in your home?

What (other) problems do insects sometimes make?

What do you do to fight back against insects?

Let's talk about meals.

What do you usually eat for breakfast?

Do you have a favourite dish? What?

Do you like sweet food? Why (not)?

How often do you eat in restaurants?

### Part Two

Part Two Introduction

... leading to...

**Describe a well-known person (alive or dead) who you would like to meet.**

You should talk about:

- why you want to meet him/her
- what you would ask this person
- what you would do with this person

and what role this person played/has played in the world.

One minute for note taking

All right? Remember you have one to two minutes for this, so don't worry if I stop you. I'll tell you when the time is up. Can you start speaking now, please?

Do the Long Turn, and finish before, or at, the two minute mark.

Thank you.

Have you always wanted to meet this person?

Thank you. Can you give me back the topic and the pencil and paper, please.

### Part Three

Part Three Introduction

... leading to...

#### Fame

What sort of people often become famous?  
Do you think they deserve such fame?  
Do you think famous people should earn the money they do?  
Are there drawbacks to being famous?

#### Study and Achievements

Do you think high achievers must always study? Why (not)?  
Do you think study can sometimes prevent achievement?  
Does your education system encourage achievement? How?  
What about the teachers?

#### Relationship Achievements

Do you think marriage is necessary in life? Why (not)?  
Do you think it is necessary to have children?  
Why is it that many women seem to no longer want to have children?  
What do you think men and women want from their romantic partner?

Thank you for coming. That is the end of the speaking test.

## Conclusion

Well, that concludes our practical and strategic study of the IELTS Speaking Test. At this point I would like to mention again a comment from the ‘About this Book’ section – that all the tips in this book are *very* useful, and will certainly help you achieve the band scores you deserve, but they are not magic.

Certainly, by following these tips and hints *correctly* and *appropriately*, you can indeed improve your chances greatly, but you *must* follow them correctly and appropriately, and this requires you to know them well, practise them a great deal, and develop yourself and your independent thinking skills. If you do not do this, you will try to use the tips in this book, but make mistakes, mix up the strategies, forget the important advice, and *not* do better at all. How can speaking tips help if you still cannot speak?

So, to advance significantly *beyond* the scores of your present ability you will need to keep working on English skills: listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. You also need to keep experiencing the world to help with ideas, examples, and original thinking. By doing this, *together* with careful study of this book, you will begin to use the tips and hints correctly and appropriately, reaching your goals, and going beyond.



# Answer Section

## About This Book, Vocabulary Exercise

- |                |                  |                          |                   |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. clarified   | 6. range         | 11. familiar             | 16. reaction      |
| 2. indication  | 7. reply/respond | 12. cue                  | 17. relevant      |
| 3. basis       | 8. rambled       | 13. groove               | 18. categories    |
| 4. anticipated | 9. short-circuit | 14. bounced              | 19. appropriate   |
| 5. proof       | 10. reflects     | 15. compliment, flattery | 20. chronological |

## Tip 1, Exercise 1: Features of Natural Speech

- |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. I | 4. F | 7. A | 10. C |
| 2. B | 5. J | 8. D |       |
| 3. G | 6. H | 9. E |       |

## Tip 1, Exercise 2: The 'Beat' of English

**Actually**, I prefer **cats**. You **see**, ... I have personal experience with **cats**. I grew up with them, and I **really** began to admire their **grace**, **cleanliness**, and **attitude** to life. I remember a **bumper** sticker I once **read**, which **said**, '**Dogs** have **masters**; **cats** have **servants**.' And guess **what**? I actually **like** that attitude in cats. **Seeing** their complete self-**indulgence** makes me feel **relaxed**.

### Some Rules

1. When listing, we stress the list items.  
'I admire their **grace**, **cleanliness**, and **attitude** to life.'
2. We usually stress the key nouns – that is, the 'content' words, rather than the 'grammar' words.  
'**Where** did you **go**?' These are often at the start and end of a sentence. '**Dogs** have **masters**; **cats** have **servants**.'
3. We usually stress adverbs of attitude, since attitude has a great deal of content. '**Actually**, I prefer **cats**.' '**Admittedly**, dogs have **advantages**.' '**Clearly**, that answer is **wrong**.'
4. We often use stress for emphasis – that is, to make our point stronger.  
'Then I **really** began to admire them.' 'I actually **like** that attitude.'



**Tip 3, Hint 1, Exercise 10, Part One: Prepositions at the End of Questions**

- |          |           |              |                |
|----------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. in    | 6. with   | 11. in       | 16. about/over |
| 2. of    | 7. about  | 12. at       | 17. of         |
| 3. about | 8. at     | 13. in/at    | 18. to         |
| 4. at    | 9. of     | 14. with     | 19. in         |
| 5. of    | 10. about | 15. of/about | 20. for        |

**Tip 3, Hint 2, Exercise 11: 'Stress' for Clarification**

**Part One**

We stress the word which needs to be clarified, contrasted, or made clearer. Possible answers are:

- Steven **liked** the singer with the red dress, but *John did not*.
- Steven **liked** the singer with the red dress, but *he thought she was too slow*.
- Steven liked the **singer** with the red dress, but *he didn't like the dancer*.
- Steven liked the singer with the **red** dress, but *not the one in blue*.
- Steven liked the singer with the red **dress**, but *not the one with the green hat*.

**Part Two**

Since there are many words in the answer, we stress the word which answers the question.

1. **Steven** gave Susie a pencil.
2. Steven **gave** Susie a pencil.
3. Steven gave **Susie** a pencil.
4. Steven gave Susie a **pencil**.

**Part Three**

Here we stress the noun which was mistaken, giving emphasis on: 6. 'white', 7. 'coffee', and 8. 'small'.

**Tip 4, Part Three, Exercise 15: Body Language**

Probable answers are:

'Good' Body Language	'Bad' Body Language
Putting your hands together as if praying	Fiddling/fidgeting/gripping your hands
Putting your hand on your cheek	Putting your arms across the chest
Putting your palms upwards	Open and closing your mouth
Staring aside for a while	Touching your nose

Looking at your fingers

Raising your eyebrows

Stroking your chin

Pursing your lips

Smiling

Staring at the floor

Tapping the table

Biting your nails

Pulling your ear

Licking your lips

Swallowing

Grimacing

The body language in the first column at least shows a ‘thinking’ or ‘evaluating’ process. The third and sixth actually ‘ask’ a question similar to ‘What’s next?’ or ‘What’s the next question?’ and can be used to ‘cue’ the examiner that you have finished your answer. [See Tip 11]

The body language in the second column shows a lack of ability to answer questions. It shows a ‘panic’ response, which signals, ‘I don’t have the English skills to answer that question,’ and ‘I am using noticeable effort to produce speaking’. But remember, IELTS Seven = ‘speaks *without* noticeable effort’.

Clearly then, you should try to avoid any of the ‘bad’ body language.

### Tip 6, Part One, Exercise 19: Discourse Markers

#### Part One

Let me tell you a few things about myself. I am married with one child – a little boy, and I live and work in Taiwan now. *Actually*, I’ve lived and worked in over five different countries. *Clearly* (from having written this book), I’m an English teacher with a lot of experience preparing students for the IELTS test. *Incidentally*, I can speak Spanish. *You see*, I worked in Venezuela for a year, and traveled around South America for a year also. *Naturally*, learning Spanish took some time. *Surprisingly*, it hasn’t helped me much at all in life. *Anyway*, summing up, it was an interesting phase, but life moves on.

*Okay*, I’d like to talk a little bit about Russia. *Presumably*, people in that country dress very warmly in the winter. *Apparently*, they drink a lot of vodka. But, *as you know*, in my country we prefer beer. That’s probably because the weather is so hot there, *you know*, hot and dry, and we like to go, *you know*, swimming at beaches.

*Right*, let’s now talk about my mother. *Frankly*, I don’t like her that much. *Mind you*, she worked hard raising three children. *Unfortunately*, she herself had bad parents, and a bad upbringing. *Basically*, she and I have just never got along with each other.

Okay, can we talk about a politician from another country I'll diplomatically not mention? *In actual fact*, I was working in that country when he was elected, and saw what subsequently happened. *As a matter of fact*, this man is now in prison! *As far as I'm concerned*, that's exactly where he belongs! *Predictably*, he claims he is a victim of a government conspiracy.

**Part Two**

- |           |          |            |          |
|-----------|----------|------------|----------|
| 1. C, v   | 4. F, vi | 7. A, ii   | 10. B, i |
| 2. D, iii | 5. J, ix | 8. H, vii  |          |
| 3. I, iv  | 6. E, x  | 9. G, viii |          |

**Part Three**

Some of the adverbs have similar meanings, so there could be different answers. The 'best' answers are:

- |           |           |            |           |
|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| 1. B, iii | 4. A, vii | 7. E, ii   | 10. H, vi |
| 2. F, iv  | 5. J, xii | 8. I, v    | 11. L, x  |
| 3. G, i   | 6. C, ix  | 9. D, viii | 12. K, xi |

**Part Four**

- |                |               |                  |                |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. Clearly     | 4. Presumably | 7. ironically    | 10. evidently  |
| 2. Naturally   | 5. certainly  | 8. Incidentally  | 11. Obviously  |
| 3. undoubtedly | 6. frankly    | 9. Unfortunately | 12. definitely |

**Tip 8, Exercise 22**

**Case 4**

Word Learning Time

3, 1, 2, 5, 4

**Case 5**

Word Learning Time

3, 1, 2

**Tip 9, Exercise 24**

**Case 5**

Word Learning Time

2, 4, 1, 3

**Tip 10, Exercise 27: Possible Speaking Divisions and Answers**

**Part One**

My divisions would be:

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Alcohol                     | Beer / Hard liquor                      |
| 2. City life                   | Depends on the city: Melbourne / Taipei |
| 3. Summer                      | On holiday / Working                    |
| 4. Computers                   | When they function / When they do not   |
| 5. Computer games              | Educational, eg.chess / Non-educational |
| 6. The food that you eat       | Weekdays / Weekends                     |
| 7. The university system       | My country / Taiwan                     |
| 8. The modern way of life      | If I am rich or poor                    |
| 9. The clothes that you wear   | Depends on the occasion                 |
| 10. The weather where you live | Spring in Melbourne / Winter in Taipei  |

**Part Two**

Some possible ‘divisions’ are:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Students/Workers      | 9. Summer/Winter                        |
| 2. Modern/Traditional    | 10. Speak English/ Not speak English    |
| 3. Rich/Poor             | 11. Profession you study                |
| 4. Outgoing/Quiet people | 12. Married/Single                      |
| 5. Old/Young             | 13. Academic/Creative students          |
| 6. Coast/City            | 14. Those with time/ Those without time |
| 7. Men/Women             | 15. Educated/Non-educated               |
| 8. North/South           | 16. Country/City                        |

**Tip 10, Notes on Tips 8 to10**

**Word Learning Time**

3, 1, 8, 10, 6, 9, 4 ,2, 11, 5, 12, 7

**Tip 17, Hint 1, Exercise 38**

- |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. H | 4. D | 7. C | 10. I |
| 2. F | 5. B | 8. E |       |
| 3. G | 6. A | 9. J |       |

5B and 3G are closely related. 5B more clearly divides into two, while 3G is more open and unstructured. Similarly, 6A and 1H are closely related. 6A is more defined [because of surprise, interest, puzzlement, and other reactions], while 1H is again more open and unstructured.

‘Sue’ uses Patterns 5, 6, 2, and 2, respectively.

## Tip 19, Point F: Reflect the Question

### Word Learning Time

3, 4, 1, 5, 2

## Summarising Exercise

### Part One of the Speaking Test: The Interview, Task 2

#### Word Learning Time

3, 1, 2

#### Word Learning Time

3, 1, 2

#### Word Learning Time

7, 1, 4, 3, 2, 5, 6

### Part Three of the Speaking Test: The Discussion

#### Word Learning Time

4, 1, 3, 5, 2

#### Word Learning Time

3, 4, 1, 2

#### Word Learning Time

2, 5, 7, 3, 6, 8, 4, 1

#### Word Learning Time

4, 5, 1, 2, 3

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Tip 7, Hint 3, Exercise 21

In Question 3, the paraphrased words are:

A: hospitals, B: native, C: regularly, D: automatic, and E: experienced.

### Question 4: Examples of Paraphrasing

	Paraphrasing for...	Word
1.	That hard white stuff that they put around the part of your body where the bone is broken, so that it stays still.	<i>a plaster cast</i>
2.	Those long wooden things that you use to help you walk after you've broken a leg.	<i>crutches</i>
3.	Those metal wires above the ground that bring electric power to houses.	<i>(electric) power lines</i>
4.	That gun, the long thin one, that hunters or soldiers use, which is much more accurate.	<i>a rifle</i>
5.	To remove the hair from the bottom part of your face with that special sharp cutting thing.	<i>to shave</i>
6.	To illegally paint stupid pictures and writing on the walls of houses and buildings; you know, the stuff you see on every wall around train stations here [in Melbourne].	<i>to graffiti</i>
7.	That condition when you drink too much alcohol, so that you become half asleep and don't know what you're doing.	<i>to be drunk</i>
8.	When what's in your stomach pours uncontrollably out of your mouth – often after you've drunk too much.	<i>to vomit, or throw up</i>

## Appendix 2

### Tip 10, Exercise 27: Part Three

A few possible answers (based on Taiwan, where I presently live) are:

**Question 3: Is skiing popular among people here?**

Stating the Simplification	[Nothing]
Dividing	That depends on whether you have money or not, since I don't believe there are any ski fields in this country.
Discussing	For those who have the money, skiing is a possibility, and may be popular, probably in Japan,
Exemplifying (Personal)	although I once met a guy who obviously came from a very rich family, and told me about his annual skiing trips to Switzerland, and [smiling] <i>boy</i> , did I feel envious* at the casual way he said that.
Other division	Otherwise though, very few people have the money, or time, to go skiing, so I can't imagine it being a popular pastime, generally,
Exemplifying (Personal)	and that includes with me, of course, poverty-stricken* as I am.

**Question 6: Do many people here eat fast-food?**

Stating the Simplification	It's difficult to generalise for what is actually a complex question.
Dividing	What immediately springs to mind is yes, many people do, but probably they are more likely to be students.
Exemplifying (Specific)	For example, I live next to Ui-da Vocational School, and their students are constantly streaming* into the street food vendors and takeaway shops, mainly because those outlets* are cheap. But that's just students, so I'm not sure if that's representative* of the public at large.
Other division	So, for other people, just the average worker, I'm not convinced they would eat fast-food very often at all. It seems like for them that the 'lunch box' meal is far more popular, but I don't classify this as fast-food, since the stuff you put in your mouth is real, with genuine nutritional* value.
Exemplifying (Personal)	I certainly don't eat fast-food, particularly of the western variety, and neither does my family.

**Question 7: Do you think cooking at home is popular?**

Stating the Simplification	That question assumes a simplicity in society which clearly cannot really exist.
Dividing	Basically, it would all depend on whether you have the time and skill, but particularly time, since in modern society, time has become the paramount* consideration.

Exemplifying / Discussing	For example, if you are just too busy working, then cooking at home is not practical at all, particularly if all you can do is boil an egg. Under these circumstances, how can cooking at home be good? On the other hand, if you are, say, a married women staying at home, and a good cook at that, cooking may well be the best option.
Exemplifying (Personal)	Speaking personally now, we have a brand new kitchen in our apartment – totally brand-spanking new – and it’s never been used since it was installed, about a year ago. So how do you like that, brand new, and never been used. It reminds me of a joke I heard in ‘Sex and the City’: ‘Cook? Me? I use my oven for storage.’

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	envious	(adj)	to move somewhere in large amounts
2	poverty-stricken	(adj)	typical of a particular group of people
3	to stream	(v)	more important than anything else
4	outlet	(n)	extremely poor; with very little money
5	representative	(adj)	related to the food necessary to grow and be healthy
6	nutritional	(adj)	a shop/store that sells goods of a particular type/company
7	paramount	(adj)	wanting something or some position that someone else has

**Appendix 3**

**Tip 17, Hint 2, Exercise 39**

**Examples of Buying Time**

1. **What are the main industries in your country?**  
 You know, I’ve never really thought much about that before. I suppose there are many important industries. One of them is probably...
2. **Who is your favourite writer?**  
 Actually, I can’t really answer that question because I don’t read much fiction. The only things I’ve been reading lately are textbooks and websites, and other stuff like that. Can I talk instead about my favourite website?
3. **Why did you choose to study [X] ?**  
 To tell you the truth, I’m still not too sure about the answer to that. Maybe there was no reason at all – or at least no *good* reason. I suppose...
4. **What events are most significant in your country’s history?**
  - **[For China]** The history of my country goes back almost 5000 years, so the question you are asking is incredibly broad. I suppose...



- Oh, when I studied history, all we did was memorise names and dates, so I don't really know. One event that stays in my mind, although it might not be *highly* significant, is...
- I never did well in history in high school, and didn't take it later on, and was never interested anyway. So, how do you expect me to answer that question? I suppose...

**5. What do you think of western food?**

What do I think of western food? Well, firstly, I think it depends on what you *mean* by western food. It's actually a very hard term to describe these days. I think I read that some sort of curry – vindaloo or something like that – is now the most popular take-away food in Britain.

**6. Tell me about your grandparents?**

Actually, I never knew any of them very well, because they had all died by the time I was old enough to know them. I *can* say... I vaguely remember someone I couldn't stand and tried to avoid as much as possible.

**7. Tell me about your primary school days?**

Oh, that was a few years back actually. And that includes a six year period, so I'm not sure exactly which parts to talk about. There's Grade Four, Mr. Collier, or Grade Five, Miss Kavanagh, or was it Mr Laidlaw? I guess I could tell you about...

**8. Why do you think looking after babies is difficult?**

- **[For a student]** Actually, I have no first hand experience of looking after babies, so I can only go by my own general knowledge. Maybe there are two... no, three reasons why it's difficult. Firstly, I suppose...
- **[For me]** Wow, that's a great question for me to answer, as I've had heaps of first hand experience, having raised a child, and let me tell you right now that it is absolutely positively definitely a difficult job! And, it certainly depends on the baby, and my baby must have been the worst of them all!

**9. What is the single greatest invention of the last few centuries?**

Now that's a question I've never really thought about ever. There are probably two or three good candidates for that, although I'm not sure what they are. I can tell you about one invention, but I don't know if it's the greatest or not. It's...

**10. How do you think global warming can be dealt with?**

I know this subject is in the papers a lot recently, although I haven't really paid that much attention to it, and, actually, I'm not too conversant on the mechanics of how it works. I suppose...

**11. What is the main cause of pollution in your country?**

There are many causes, I suppose, and they are probably basically the same as in any country. I guess...

**12. What do you think of euthanasia/mercy killing?**

I'm afraid I don't know exactly what you mean by 'euthanasia'? Do you mean... well, what do you mean: deliberately killing patients, or just allowing them to die without trying to save them?

## Appendix 4

### Tip 19, Exercise 45

#### 10 Examples for Part Three of the Speaking Test

Note: in these answers, spoken words that carry high stress (for emphasis, clarification, contrast, and so on) are shown in *italic* print.

#### 3. Why do people have hobbies?

<b>Buy Time</b> (Rhetorical question; musing)	Why do people have hobbies? Many reasons I suppose. I guess I can answer that question personally, because I actually have a few hobbies myself.	Signaling a shift to a personal perspective in order to answer the question [Tip 4, Part Two]
<b>Answer</b>	I like <i>jogging</i> , for instance;	
<b>Say why</b>	... I mean, it relaxes me, so I guess many people find hobbies relaxing, probably because they let you think of something else, something that <i>isn't</i> work as such, and you also get the satisfaction of being <i>good</i> at it, or <i>knowledgeable</i> about it. Maybe it sort of takes your mind off the problems of day-to-day living.	Shifting back to the <i>impersonal</i> perspective, as the question requires.
<b>Exemplify</b>	When I go jogging, usually at night, my whole body gets into a rhythm*, and that seems to make me feel better, and y'know what's <i>funny</i> ? – at the <i>end</i> , pouring sweat*, <i>totally exhausted</i> *, I actually feel <i>better</i> than when I <i>started</i> . So, there I am, at the <i>beginning</i> , you know, feeling run down and worn-out and shagged out* from work, and there I am, at the <i>end</i> , feeling rejuvenated* and absolutely ready for anything!	
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	You'd think the opposite, wouldn't you?	

#### Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>rhythm</b>	(n)
2	<b>sweat</b>	(n)
3	<b>exhausted</b>	(adj)
4	<b>shagged out</b>	(adj)
5	<b>rejuvenated</b>	(adj)

[informal] very tired; exhausted
very tired
the drops of liquid that appear on the skin
to be fresh and new again
a strong regular repeated pattern of sounds or movement

4. What jobs are likely to be popular in the future in your country?

<b>Buy Time</b> (Musing; announcing the count)	I guess ... it's just about impossible to do crystal-ball* stuff and actually know how the future will unfold*. If I had to guess, then, in my country, there could be, maybe, <i>two</i> possibilities.
<b>Answer</b>	Firstly, I think basic jobs such as plumbing* or electrical trades* will become popular.
<b>Say why</b>	Apparently there's a shortage of basic trade skills, and people with these right now can earn a lot of money, so I suppose this trend will continue for quite a while into the future.
<b>Exemplify</b>	I read that basic tradesmen these days are the 'new elite*', now earning more than lawyers. I know someone, as dumb and dull as a doorknob, who by doing shifts*, and getting shift allowance, actually earns <i>more</i> than me just working for the railways selling tickets. And we had to pay an absolute <i>fortune</i> just to get our air-conditioner installed, <i>and</i> the workman still did a lightning quick and crap* job at that.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	Do you know what I mean?

Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>crystal ball</b>	(n)	a person's scheduled period of work, esp. when it changes
2	<b>to unfold</b>	(v)	a clear glass ball used by people who think they can predict
3	<b>plumbing</b>	(n)	a field of business activity
4	trade	(n)	relating to the system of pipes, and water and liquid wastes
5	<b>elite</b>	(adj)	[coll.] of very bad quality
6	shift	(n)	people of the highest class
7	crap	(adj)	to be gradually made known

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working abroad?

<b>Buy Time</b> (Dividing and riding)	That would depend on the sort of job you have, which can vary from person to person. For instance, ...
<b>Answer</b>	... if your job involves dealing with the locals, then you can certainly learn the language of that country, in theory at least.
<b>Say why</b>	You have that speech all around you, and sort of live it, I suppose, so basically, every day could be a language lesson, all day, all the time.

<b>Exemplify</b>	Naturally enough, I <i>really</i> improved my Spanish by working in Venezuela for a year, but now, <i>alas</i> *, having not spoken <i>any</i> Spanish for about 20 years, I've forgotten most of it – but that's the way the proverbial* cookie crumbles*, as they say.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	Do you know where Venezuela is?
<b>Other Division</b>	Yeah, but that advantage is only significant if that language is an important one - like in America or Australia, where Asian students could pick up* English. Otherwise then, there could be no advantages, apart from just earning decent money, which I suppose is why many people do it.

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>alas</b>	(Excl.)	according to the proverb or saying
2	proverbial	(adj)	to break into small fragments or crumbs
3	to <b>crumble</b>	(v)	to get information or a skill by chance, rather than deliberate effort
4	to <b>pick up</b>	(v)	[old use, or for effect] used to show that you are sad or sorry

**11. Is the quality of dentistry good or bad in your country?**

<b>Buy Time</b> (Personal reaction)	I wish I could talk about the quality of <i>doctors</i> in my country, because then I'd <i>emphatically</i> tell you it is absolutely <i>appalling</i> *, and the doctors there are some of the most <i>ignorant</i> and dangerously incompetent <i>hacks</i> * in the world. And I could give you a long story about <i>eight</i> successive* doctors, including <i>two</i> pediatric* gastroenterologists, and how each was more ignorant and clueless than the other, and how they really bugged up* my son's treatment, to the extent that we finally took him abroad for treatment! As for dentists, ...
<b>Answer</b>	I'm not so sure, but I will say that they are <i>incredibly</i> expensive, and I certainly have some anecdotal* evidence that they are generally not so good, something that <i>wouldn't</i> surprise me in the least.
<b>Exemplify</b>	A Taiwanese lady told me that she had some dental work done in my country, something about putting a cap on a tooth, but the nerve wasn't killed beforehand, meaning that it re-infected, and she mentioned that she paid an <i>incredible</i> sum of money, typically, and then had to have it all re-done here in Taiwan.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	Is it the same in your country?

**Note:** You should realise that this is an honestly-felt opinion – which is the basis of good speaking [Tip 1, and especially Tip 19: Want to Do it!]. Remember, in the IELTS Speaking test there are no 'Task Fulfilment' or 'Task Response' categories, meaning that you *can* talk off the topic, as long as you are being honest about this. [See the 'About the IELTS Speaking Test, Question 7, and Tip 18, Hint 1].

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	appalling	(adj)	a person who does low quality work, esp. a writer
2	hack	(n)	shocking; extremely bad
3	successive	(adj)	to break or ruin something
4	pediatric	(adj)	following immediately one after the other
5	to bugger (up)	(v)	based on stories people say, possibly not accurate
6	anecdotal	(adj)	the branch of medicine concerned with children

**15. Do you think school prepares students well for the workforce?**

<b>Buy Time</b>	[Nothing]
<b>Answer</b>	No, I don't—not at all, in fact.
<b>Say why</b>	Basically, school is all theoretical, and personally, I don't think it emphasises enough the interpersonal skills that you <i>really</i> need to succeed in life. Most education is test-based... exam-based, and the knowledge is purely abstract*; you know, like maths questions, or scientific facts, and so on. What I found in real life was that second-rate incompetents* who can clink* the Chardonnay* glasses with the bosses are often promoted over others, so it's not a question of skill or knowledge, but of simply brown-nosing* your way to the top.
<b>Exemplify</b>	I remember one place I worked, where one person was hopelessly incompetent*—just a pedantic*, minute*-minded, micro-managing bureaucrat*, and <i>god-awful</i> —absolutely <i>god-awful</i> —as a teacher and manager, but that person kissed all the right bottoms, as they say—and typically, was promoted upwards. [Smiling] It reminds me of the old joke: in a bureaucracy*, everyone rises to the level of their own incompetence*.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	Do you know what I mean?
	[Examiner nods]
<b>Continuing (Dividing)</b>	But still, I could only shake my head incredulously* at the time. But, one must admit that political skills are important, particularly in an organisation, which is <i>basically</i> just a community of humans, full of personalities that need to be finessed*. So, in some ways, politics is inevitable, and maybe I shouldn't underestimate its importance.

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>abstract</b>	(adj)	person lacking the skill to do sth. well
2	<b>incompetent</b>	(n)	a popular variety of white wine
3	to clink	(v)	not having enough skill to do sth. well
4	<b>Chardonnay</b>	(n)	to make or cause a sharp ringing sound
5	to <b>brown-nose</b>	(v)	too worried about small details or rules
6	<b>pedantic</b>	(adj)	based on general thought; not having physical reality
7	<b>minute</b>	(adj)	not willing or not able to believe sth.
8	<b>bureaucrat</b>	(n)	an official in a company who follows the rules too strictly
9	<b>bureaucracy</b>	(n)	to deal with sth. in a way that is clever but not obvious
10	<b>incompetence</b>	(n)	(inf.) to treat sb. with flattery, etc. to achieve your ends
11	<b>incredulous</b>	(adj)	extremely small
12	to <b>finesse</b>	(v)	the system of rules that an organisation has, often complex

**17. Do you think children should do housework/chores?**

<b>Buy Time</b>	[Nothing]
<b>Answer</b>	Sure, why not? I think it's a good idea.
<b>Say why</b>	It encourages a sense of responsibility, but mostly, it can help the parents around the house, which is fair enough if they're already working their guts* out.
<b>Exemplify</b>	Every night, when I get home from work, I sweep and mop the floor of our apartment, and there's my little boy, maybe watching TV, and I think, 'Stop smiling you little scamp* because one day in a few years time, <i>you're</i> going to be doing this.' And I certainly look forward to <i>that</i> day, I'll tell you that. And y'know, while I was growing up, I did <i>heaps</i> of stuff for my family, mostly of the gardening variety. Basically, my father never mowed* the lawn* ever, once his sons had reached their teenage years. Even at the age of 14 I was mixing concrete* for pathways around the house, and, actually, my dad and I worked in tandem* on many building projects for the house and garage.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	I suppose you did the same sort of thing?

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	to work your <b>guts</b> out	(v)	a child who enjoys playing tricks and causing trouble
2	scamp	(n)	a hard stone material often used in construction
3	to mow	(v)	an area of ground covered in short cut grass
4	lawn	(n)	to work very hard to achieve sth.
5	<b>concrete</b>	(n)	together; as a team
6	in <b>tandem</b>	(n)	to cut grass using a machine

**22. Have you noticed changing weather patterns in your country?**

<b>Buy Time</b> (Evaluation the question)	It's hard to say because that needs a long term perspective* but ...
<b>Answer</b>	... having said that, I think I have, actually...
<b>Say why</b>	... but maybe that's because I'm old enough to remember further back in the past, being almost... er... 35, right? [smiling] Well, maybe not. Anyway, they say that it's all because of global warming, which may be true.
<b>Exemplify</b>	What's <i>really</i> interesting is that I remember, as a little boy in primary school, walking to school in those <i>freezing</i> Melbourne winters, and seeing <i>frost</i> * on the grass. You know, a beautiful dusting of snowy white ice crystals* across the paddocks* and parks, and occasionally, a small amount of icing up of puddles* – you know, the rain puddles* with a thin crust* of ice across the top. I <i>distinctly</i> remember breaking those crusts with my feet. <i>Now</i> , don't quote me, because I'm not really sure, but I believe that <i>never</i> happens now. Basically, it just never gets <i>that</i> cold anymore, so I find that <i>really</i> interesting – that even in my own relatively short lifetime, global warming seems apparent* and observable.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	Don't you think that's interesting?

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	perspective	(n)	a hard layer or surface above sth. soft or liquid
2	frost	(n)	a small field or area of land that has fences around it
3	crystal	(n)	a small amount of water that has collected on the ground
4	paddock	(n)	a thin white layer of ice that forms on surfaces due to the cold
5	puddle	(n)	a particular attitude or way of thinking about sth.
6	crust	(n)	obvious; easy to see or understand
7	apparent	(adj)	a hard substance formed when a liquid becomes cold

**25. What ethnic groups does your country have?**

<b>Buy Time</b> (Announcing the count)	You could divide that clearly into two, absolutely.
<b>Answer</b>	First, aboriginals, and the other group would be all the immigrant non-white minorities, who actually seem so <i>numerous</i> now as to comprise* a <i>majority</i> , particularly Asians. The aboriginals often get all the 'minority' attention...
<b>Say why</b>	... since they originally occupied the continent*, but as a percentage of the population, they are actually pretty small, or I think so, and not particularly visible either.
<b>Exemplify</b>	I'm not sure, and I could stand corrected here, but I think they mostly inhabit* desert areas, on designated* aboriginal land – in fact, when I was touring the country on a motorbike, I visited some of these lands, just out of curiosity, somewhere in the central areas, I think. What surprised me at the time, incidentally, was that most of them didn't even speak English, and basically lived simply, sleeping on mattresses out in the bush, and giving all the appearance of being semi-domesticated*.
<b>Other Division</b>	Anyhow, I digress*. Uh, as for the <i>immigrant</i> populations, they're really noticeable, and, for example, if you group all Asian countries as one ethnic group, that group – Asians – are a <i>huge</i> segment of the population, with real economic clout*.



**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	to <b>comprise</b>	(v)	to live in a particular place
2	<b>continent</b>	(n)	to be the parts or members that form sth. larger
3	to <b>inhabit</b>	(v)	one of the large land masses of the earth
4	<b>designated</b>	(adj)	to talk about sth. that is not connected with the main point
5	<b>domesticated</b>	(adj)	to say officially that sth. has properties, duties, or rules about it
6	to <b>digress</b>	(v)	power and influence
7	clout	(n)	being used to living with or working for humans

**27. Do you think art museums are worth the money invested in them?**

<b>Buy Time (Musing)</b>	Ah, an old issue, particularly with a philistine* like me, and already I'm remembering some disagreements from the past.
<b>Answer</b>	My answer is 'no', and maybe a fairly emphatic* one at that, although I know I'm setting myself up for potshots*, here. Well, crucify* me if you wish, but here goes.
<b>Say why</b>	I think in the real world, in real life, artwork is basically pretentious* crap*! Sure, a Van Gogh is cute, but so are my kid's pictures from his art class, so valuing one at umpteen* million dollars is just a stupid human conceit*.
<b>Exemplify</b>	Put it this way. Just look at a tree. That's all. A humble* tree, or a flower, or a bush, and you'll see a work of art that's magnificent, that's unparalleled*, that's absolutely incomparable – a work of art that makes all the human-made junk we esteem* in art museums paltry*, pathetic, and over-valued in comparison. Frankly, I'd rather look at a pine cone*.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	Of course, you are free to disagree.

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>philistine</b>	(n)	given with force to show it is definite or important
2	<b>emphatic</b>	(adj)	a shot [fig. criticism] that sb. fires without aiming carefully
3	<b>potshot</b>	(n)	(informal) many times
4	to <b>crucify</b>	(v)	[coll.] nonsense; something of very bad quality
5	<b>pretentious</b>	(adj)	bigger, or better, or worse, than anything else similar to it
6	crap	(n)	not large or special in any way
7	<b>umpteen</b>	(adj)	the cone-shaped seed-bearing growth from pine trees

8	conceit	(n)	having little value or useful qualities
9	humble	(adj)	too much pride in yourself or what you do
10	unparalleled	(adj)	to respect and admire very much
11	to esteem	(v)	(informal, figurative) to criticise very severely
12	paltry	(adj)	trying to appear important to impress others
13	pine cone	(n)	a person who lacks, or rejects, cultural and/or intellectual values

30. Do you think the world is becoming more, or less, politically stable?

<b>Buy Time</b> (The honest approach; listening noise, musing)	Ah, do I .... just let me think a moment. Ahhh, I guess ... the most immediate and obvious reaction, I guess, is to say <i>more</i> , but actually, I'm not so sure, when I come to think about it.
<b>Exemplify</b>	You know, I read a book once, called 'The Name of the Rose', and this book was set in medieval* Italy – in a period in which you'd think life would be simpler, but what struck me from that book was just how complicated, multi-layered, and unstable society was, even then, and in some ways, more so than now...
<b>Answer</b>	... so basically, I'm not convinced that what's happening now in the world in relation to war, religious differences, separatist movements, terrorism and so on, is any different from what's been happening since civilisation began.
<b>Say why</b>	Maybe humanity is just naturally tribal* and fractious* and disputatious*, in any age, any era*, right back into prehistory. Cavemen were banging rival cavemen on the heads, and essentially we're doing the same thing in modern times. The only difference now is that our toys are bigger and more powerful, and we have CNN to tell us all about it.
<b>(Reflect Q.)</b>	Wouldn't you say so?

Word Learning Time

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	medieval	(adj)	bad-tempered or easily upset
2	tribal	(adj)	a period of time, usu. in history, that is different from others
3	fractious	(adj)	connected with the Middle Ages (AD 1000-1450)
4	disputatious	(adj)	connected with tribes or a tribe (group of people led by a chief)
5	era	(n)	tending to argue, dispute, or disagree

## Appendix 5

## Summarising Exercise, Task 7

## Two Examples of the Individual Long Turn

Once again, in these answers, spoken words that carry high stress (for emphasis, clarification, contrast, and so on) are shown in *italic* print.

## 1. Organised by Using Rhetorical Question Approach

Beginning *then*, I'll tell you about something I own which is very important to *me*, and that would be my humble\* USB stick.

Let's *see*... where did I get it from? *Um*, I think I got it from a small electronics shop in I-Lan, when I was visiting my in-laws there, and I paid a pretty small sum, I *think*, because the item was on special at the time, which is basically the only reason my wife let me buy it.

*Ah*, ... how long have I had it? *Ah*, probably for about a year now, and I've heard that these sticks can last for a *very* long time, so I expect to keep using it in the future, particularly since the capacity\* is eight gigabytes – more than enough for my needs.

What do I use it for? *Well*, basically, I use it *all* the time: *every* day, *every* moment, because, being somewhat of a bookworm; it stores a veritable\* *mountain* of material: programs and assorted writings. *Mostly*, every single lesson I teach is now based *totally* on the PowerPoint programs on that stick, provided of course that I can *avail*\* myself of a projector system, but frankly, I wouldn't teach anywhere now unless I had such facilities.

*Right*, why is it important to me? *Well*, this tiny stick now holds *years* of carefully crafted\* programs of growing sophistication\*, all interlinked through action buttons, creating a network of *very* professional stuff, if I may say so myself. A single program can have up to 80 slides, each having some 50 to 60 mouse clicks, each of those activating some 10 to 20 commands, all for maximum pedagogical\* effect. So, how much more important can *that* be?

*Okay*, I reckon I've answered everything, and my two minutes is almost up, so I'll leave it at *that*. Do you want the booklet back?

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	<b>humble</b>	(adj)	to make use of sth.
2	<b>capacity</b>	(n)	seeming to be so; being able to be compared to sth.
3	<b>veritable</b>	(adj)	the quantity or number that a device can handle
4	<b>to avail</b>	(v)	appearing to be not large or special sth. any way
5	<b>crafted</b>	(adj)	cleverness and complication in the way sth. works
6	<b>sophistication</b>	(n)	concerning the principles of teaching
7	<b>pedagogic</b>	(adj)	made with special skill

**2. Organised by Using the OCOE 'Story-Telling' Approach**

	Okay, this prompt asks me to talk about something I own which is very important to me, so I'll choose my flash drive, or USB stick, whatever you choose to call it.
<b>O</b>	Okay, ... this is a deceptively* small device*, containing eight megabytes of memory, and when it's not plugged into a computer, it generally hangs around my neck, since it holds so much of my life and thoughts that I definitely don't want to lose it, apart from which, I don't want <i>other</i> people getting the information it contains.
<b>C</b> <b>/</b> <b>P</b>	Umm, I bought this about a year ago in a provincial* town called I-Lan, where my wife comes from. We were visiting her parents at the time, and walked into an electronics shops, noticing some USB sticks on special, and so, took advantage of that offer. Then I took the stick back to Taipei, and have been using it ever since, primarily for teaching purposes, since all of my teaching is based on PowerPoint programs – programs, which, incidentally, I have been steadily improving, to the point that they are now very sophisticated and impressive indeed, even if I say so myself. So far I've only had one problem with this device, when a few programs inexplicably* refused to open, and naturally that caused considerable embarrassment, particularly given that it happened in front of a cohort* of students, several times over, but, somewhat strangely, that problem seemed to just resolve itself, and has never re-surfaced.
<b>E</b>	So, apart from that, this stick has proven very reliable, and I expect to keep using it in the future, unless its capacity becomes insufficient for my purposes, although at eight gigabytes, I don't see that happening anytime soon.
	Alright, I know my two minutes is about up, so I guess I'll stop <i>here</i> .

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	deceptively	(adv)	that cannot be understood or explained
2	device	(n)	a group of people who share a common feature
3	provincial	(adj)	a piece of equipment designed to do a particular job
4	inexplicably	(adv)	likely to make you believe something is not true
5	cohort	(n)	relating to parts of a country not including the capital city

Notice that a *chronology* is used here – that is, a time ordering, in order to give a more coherent and fluent structure to the speaking [See Tip 15, Part Two].

**Appendix 6**

**Summarising Exercise, Task 8**

**Example Responses in Speaking Part Three**

Once again, in these answers, spoken words that carry high stress (for emphasis, clarification, contrast, and so on) are shown in *italic* print.

**3. ‘Let’s talk about the role of advertising.’**

*‘It’s a good topic, actually.’*

**‘Do you think advertising influences what people buy?’**

Well, I guess it *is* possible to generalise here. I mean, everyone certainly watches a lot of advertisements, and often watches them without *wanting* to, so as to whether these ads influence people or not, I think they *must*. I mean, ads wouldn’t exist unless they were effective. Some of the better television ads must cost tens of thousands of dollars to make, if not *hundreds* of thousands, so presumably\* they make *much* more back in terms of profit for the company whose product they plug\*.

**4. ‘Is advertising a force for good, or for bad?’**

I guess that question is oversimplifying a complex issue, since there must obviously be both aspects in them. Of course, my *first* reaction is to say that ads are a force for bad, and that’s probably *everyone’s* first reaction. I remember once I met a man who worked in advertising, and he said that he didn’t like his job because basically it existed to make people buy products that they didn’t need. Think about chocolate, soft drink, and all the junk food ads, and if you juxta... juxta\*... place these images alongside<sup>1</sup> those of childhood obesity\*, you can see what I mean. Have you seen just how obese\* some children are, nowadays?

Mind you, I can also see the *good* in advertisements. Without the revenue\* that they generate, a simple newspaper, for example, would probably cost... y'know... a lot of money. A magazine would be *hugely* expensive. I suppose the only thing that makes a lot of the media affordable and accessible to the viewer these days is that they generate their profits through advertising, encouraging them therefore to lower their prices and streamline\* the product's availability to similarly encourage people to view it, or buy it, or use it, or whatever. Another example of this is certain sports events, sometimes sponsored\*, *controversially* of course, by tobacco companies, although this may be banned by now – I'm not quite sure. Are you?

<sup>1</sup> I could not produce the word 'juxtapose\*', so I paraphrased.

**5. 'What are the ingredients of a successful television advertisement?'**

I'm not an advertising executive\*, so naturally I don't really know, although I certainly have seen enough ads on TV to be able to form some opinions. My first instinct is to say that an ad must be interesting, but then some ads are not interesting at all, but just so irritating that they stay in your mind, and they are probably effective for that reason – so the answer may be that an effective ad must have some gimmick in it, in order to lodge\* in your consciousness. I guess a good example of this are those ads with stupid slogans\*. I remember one where some idiot just bellowed\* out, 'Where do you get it?' all the time. Simple and stupid... [*smiling*] ... and maybe reflecting the sort of people that the advertisers were targeting\*, if you know what I mean.

**Word Learning Time**

Match the words on the left (\* in the previous text) with their meaning on the right.

1	presumably	(adv)	to put images together, esp. in order to show a contrast
2	to plug	(v)	to make a system, organisation ..etc.. work better
3	to juxtapose	(v)	a person who has an important job as a manager
4	obese/obesity	(adj)/(n)	money received in payment
5	revenue	(n)	to pay the cost of an event as a way of advertising
6	to streamline	(v)	used to say that you think sth. is probably true
7	to sponsor	(v)	very fat, in a way that is not healthy / this issue or problem
8	executive	(n)	a well-known and frequently-used phrase
9	to lodge	(v)	to shout in a loud deep voice
10	slogan	(n)	to give attention to sth. in order to make people buy it
11	to bellow	(v)	to try to affect a particular group of people
12	to target	(v)	to become fixed or stuck somewhere

## Answers to Word Learning Time

### Appendix 2

#### Word Learning Time

3, 5, 7, 2, 6, 4, 1

### Appendix 4

3. Why do people have hobbies?

#### Word Learning Time

4, 3, 2, 5, 1

4. What jobs are likely to be popular in the future in your country?

#### Word Learning Time

6, 1, 4, 3, 7, 5, 2

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working abroad?

#### Word Learning Time

2, 3, 4, 1

11. Is the quality of dentistry good or bad in your country?

#### Word Learning Time

2, 1, 5, 3, 6, 4

15. Do you think school prepares students well for the workforce?

#### Word Learning Time

2, 4, 10, 3, 6, 1, 11, 8, 12, 5, 7, 9

17. Do you think children should do housework/chores?

#### Word Learning Time

2, 5, 4, 1, 6, 3

22. Have you noticed changing weather patterns in your country?

#### Word Learning Time

6, 4, 5, 2, 1, 7, 3

25. What ethnic group does your country have?

Word Learning Time

3, 1, 2, 6, 4, 7, 5

27. Do you think art museums are worth the money invested in them?

Word Learning Time

2, 3, 7, 6, 10, 9, 13, 12, 8, 11, 4, 5, 1

30. Do you think the world is becoming more, or less, politically stable?

Word Learning Time

3, 5, 1, 2, 4

## Appendix 5

1. Organised by Using Rhetorical Question Approach

Word Learning Time

4, 3, 2, 1, 6, 7, 5

2. Organised by Using the OCOE 'Story-Telling' Approach

Word Learning Time

4, 5, 2, 1, 3

## Appendix 6

Word Learning Time

3, 6, 8, 5, 7, 1, 4, 10, 11, 2, 12, 9





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Andrew Gilfoyle

(Cambridge ELT Certificate &

ELT Diploma, M.Ed, Cambridge Certified teacher trainer)

has been teaching English since 1993, and, more importantly, specifically teaching IELTS Preparation since 1994 — a field in which he has gradually come to specialise. He thus brings to his books not only an extensive theoretical knowledge, but also a wealth of practical classroom approaches, carefully developed over years.

