

FREE IELTS STUDY PDF

ACADEMIC & GENERAL TRAINING

IELTS Syllabus PDF: Academic and General Training

The complete IELTS syllabus for Academic and General Training: every section, question type, timing and word limit, how Writing and Speaking are assessed, band score tables, the IELTS on Computer changes, and an eight-week plan.

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**Practice every section on the same
screen layout as IELTS on
Computer**

- ✓ Same screen layout as IELTS on Computer
- ✓ Instant AI feedback on Writing and Speaking
- ✓ Full mock tests and section tests

80+

Full-length mock tests

30+

SECTION 1

IELTS at a glance

IELTS tests the four language skills in one sitting of a little under three hours. Listening, Reading and Writing are taken together; Speaking is a face-to-face interview, usually on the same day or within a few days.

Section	Time	Questions or tasks	Same for Academic and GT?
Listening	About 30 minutes	40 questions in 4 parts	Yes, identical
Reading	60 minutes	40 questions in 3 passages or sections	No, different texts
Writing	60 minutes	Task 1 (150 words) and Task 2 (250 words)	No, Task 1 differs
Speaking	11 to 14 minutes	3 parts with an examiner	Yes, identical

Academic or General Training?

	IELTS Academic	IELTS General Training
Who takes it	Applicants for university study and professional registration	Applicants migrating to Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the UK, or training and studying below degree level
Reading	Three long academic passages	Everyday, workplace and one longer general-interest text
Writing Task 1	Describe a graph, chart, table or diagram	Write a letter
Listening and Speaking	Same as General Training	Same as Academic

IELTS on Computer and Writing on Paper

IELTS is now delivered on computer. All four sections are taken on screen, except Speaking, which stays face to face with an examiner. In selected markets, test takers can choose to handwrite the Writing section (Writing on Paper). Skills, timing, content and scoring are the same in both formats. The UKVI test is fully digital only.

Tip

One Skill Retake lets you retake a single section if you narrowly miss a requirement. Check that the organisation you are applying to accepts it before you rely on it.

Common mistake

Booking Academic when the visa needs General Training, or the reverse. The Reading and Writing sections differ, so confirm the requirement first.

SECTION 2

Listening

Four recordings of increasing difficulty, 40 questions, about 30 minutes. Each recording plays once only.

Part	Recording	Questions
1	An everyday social conversation between two speakers, such as travel arrangements	10
2	An everyday monologue by one main speaker, such as a talk about local facilities	10
3	An educational or training conversation between two main speakers, such as students discussing an assignment	10
4	An academic talk by one speaker	10

Listening question types

Type	What you do
Multiple choice	Choose the correct option or options
Matching	Match a list of items to a set of options
Plan, map or diagram labelling	Label parts of a visual from the recording
Form, note, table or flow-chart completion	Fill gaps with words from the recording, within the word limit
Sentence completion	Complete a sentence with words from the recording
Short-answer questions	Answer a question in a few words

Tip

Accents are British, Australian, New Zealand and North American. Practice with all four so that none of them slows you down.

Common mistake

Writing more than the word limit on completion tasks. Hyphenated words count as one word; a word over the limit loses the mark.

SECTION 3

Reading

40 questions in 60 minutes, one mark each. There is no extra time to transfer answers, so answer as you go.

Academic Reading

Feature	Detail
Passages	Three passages, 2,150 to 2,750 words in total
Sources	Books, journals, magazines, newspapers and online resources written for a non-specialist audience
Styles	Narrative, descriptive or discursive; at least one passage contains a detailed logical argument
Technical terms	Accompanied by a simple definition

Academic Reading question types (11)

Multiple choice	Matching features
Identifying information (True / False / Not Given)	Matching sentence endings
Identifying writer's views (Yes / No / Not Given)	Sentence completion
Matching information	Summary, note, table or flow-chart completion
Matching headings	Diagram label completion
Short-answer questions	

General Training Reading

Section	Texts
1	Two or three short texts, or several shorter ones, on everyday topics such as notices, advertisements and timetables
2	Two texts on workplace topics such as job descriptions, contracts and training materials
3	One long, more complex text on a general-interest topic, from a newspaper, magazine, book or online source

General Training Reading has 2,150 to 2,375 words in total and uses eight question types: multiple choice; True / False / Not Given; matching information; matching headings; matching features; summary, note, sentence, table or flow-chart completion; diagram label completion; and short-answer questions.

Tip

Spend about 20 minutes per passage and answer the easier question groups first. A skipped question costs one mark; a slow passage can cost ten.

Common mistake

Reading every passage word by word. Skim for structure, then scan for the keywords in each question.



Try every section of this syllabus on the IELTS on Computer layout

Mock tests on the same screen layout as IELTS on Computer, with instant AI feedback.

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SECTION 4

Writing

Two tasks in 60 minutes. Task 2 counts twice as much as Task 1, so give it about 40 minutes.

	Task 1	Task 2
Academic	Describe visual information (graph, table, chart, or a diagram of an object, device, process or event) in your own words	Essay responding to a point of view, argument or problem
General Training	A letter (personal, semi-formal or formal) covering three bullet points	Essay responding to a point of view, argument or problem, in a semi-formal or neutral style
Length	At least 150 words	At least 250 words
Suggested time	About 20 minutes	About 40 minutes
Weighting	One third of the Writing score	Two thirds of the Writing score

How Writing is assessed

Criterion	Task 1	Task 2
Task Achievement / Task Response	Task Achievement: covers the key features and makes comparisons	Task Response: answers every part of the question with a clear position
Coherence and Cohesion	Logical paragraphs and linking	Logical paragraphs and linking
Lexical Resource	Range and accuracy of vocabulary	Range and accuracy of vocabulary
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	Range and accuracy of grammar	Range and accuracy of grammar

Tip

Write in full, connected sentences. Notes and bullet points are penalised, and so is writing off topic.

Common mistake

Copying sentences from the question or memorised essays. Plagiarism is severely penalised in both tasks.

SECTION 5

Speaking

A recorded, face-to-face interview with a certified examiner lasting 11 to 14 minutes. The format is identical for Academic and General Training.

Part	Time	What happens
Part 1: Introduction and interview	4 to 5 minutes	Identity check, then general questions about familiar topics such as home, family, work, studies and interests
Part 2: Long turn	3 to 4 minutes	A cue card, 1 minute to prepare with pencil and paper, then up to 2 minutes of talking
Part 3: Discussion	4 to 5 minutes	Wider, more abstract questions linked to the Part 2 topic

Speaking criterion	What the examiner listens for
Fluency and Coherence	Natural pace, with ideas that connect clearly
Lexical Resource	Range of vocabulary used accurately, including less common words
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	A mix of simple and complex sentences with few errors
Pronunciation	Easy to understand, with natural stress and intonation



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SECTION 6

Band scores

Each section is scored from 1 to 9 in whole and half bands. The Overall band is the average of the four, rounded to the nearest half band.

Band	Level	In short
9	Expert	Complete, fluent, accurate command of English with full understanding
8	Very good	Fully operational command with only occasional slips
7	Good	Operational command with occasional inaccuracies and misunderstandings
6	Competent	Effective command despite some errors; handles reasonably complex language in familiar contexts
5	Modest	Partial command; conveys overall meaning but makes many mistakes
4	Limited	Basic competence restricted to familiar situations

Listening and Reading: marks to bands

Band	Listening (of 40)	Academic Reading (of 40)	General Training Reading (of 40)
8	35	35	Not published at this band
7	30	30	35
6	23	23	30
5	16	15	23
4	Not published at this band	Not published at this band	15

Rounding rules

These are the average marks needed; exact marks vary slightly between test versions. For the Overall band, an average ending in .25 rounds up to the next half band and one ending in .75 rounds up to the next whole band.

Tip

General Training Reading needs more correct answers for the same band because its texts are easier. Plan for 30 of 40 for Band 6, not 23.

Common mistake

Assuming Writing and Speaking bands are calculated from marks. They are assessed against the four criteria by examiners, not counted.

SECTION 7

An eight-week preparation plan

A plan built around the syllabus above. Shorten it if your starting level is already close to your target.

Weeks	Focus	What to do
1 to 2	Baseline and format	Take a full mock test on Gurully. Learn the question types in every section and the four criteria for Writing and Speaking.
3 to 4	Listening and Reading	Daily practice by question type. Keep an error log: wrong by word limit, wrong by paraphrase, wrong by Not Given.
5 to 6	Writing and Speaking	One Task 1 and one Task 2 every two days with feedback. Record Part 2 answers and check them against the criteria.
7 to 8	Full tests and review	Two full mock tests per week under timed conditions on screen. Review each section and repeat the weakest question types.

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Full guide on the blog: gurully.com/blog/ielts-syllabus