

**Ben:** Do you have anything that you would like to add or shall we finish there, Dmitry?

**Dmitry:** No, I could only wish good luck to IELTS students and IELTS test takers. You can do it so--

**Ben:** Fantastic.

**Dmitry:** --good luck.

**Ben:** Excellent. I was hoping you would say that. If you had just said, "Nope," then...

**Female Voice:** You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host Ben Worthington.

**Ben:** Hello there, IELTS podcast listeners. My name is Ben Worthington. In this episode, we're going to talk to Dmitry. Dmitry took the IELTS exam on the computer. So, he did his reading, listening, and writing all on the computer. He's going to tell us all about it today. So, Dmitry, welcome to the podcast. Could you tell us about yourself, where you're from, why you're taking IELTS and yes...

**Dmitry:** I'm glad to join you. My name is Dmitry. I am from Mosco. I am currently a last-year student and I'm preparing to join a Master's program and that's why I took IELTS.

**Ben:** Excellent and are you doing the Masters abroad or are you going to be doing it in Moscow?

**Dmitry:** I'm going to do my Masters abroad. I'm currently applied to a number of programs in the Netherlands. If I'm not successful in this round of applications, I'm considering a few other countries, but currently, my main option is the Netherlands.

**Ben:** Interesting. Which countries are second on your list, just out of curiosity?

**Dmitry:** It's hard to tell really. I'm still thinking about it, but there are some programs that I'm interested in in the U.S. though it's probably not my main option just because of the cost and the same applies to Britain.

Also, there are programs there that I am interested in in Singapore and surprising enough-- mostly these are English speaking countries. Basically, the Netherlands is the only option that is not an English speaking country, but their universities basically operate in English and all the programs are taught in English. In terms of IELTS requirements, they are very competitive and very demanding.

**Ben:** Interesting. Okay, what is your field, if I can ask?

**Dmitry:** My field is communication studies and I'm considering a number of programs that are focused on communication science, social sciences focused on communications and applying quantitative methods to communication studies. That's what I'm mainly interested in.

**Ben:** Excellent. Wow! As a communications expert, I'm very interested to know how you were preparing for IELTS before you took the exam.

**Dmitry:** Well, it's not really exciting. I did all of my preparations by myself. I never applied to any formal English schools or tutors or anything like that. I just bought a number of books, a set of Cambridge books. They are well known and also one IELTS trainer from Barrons and I just studied using these books and a number of random tips I found on the internet. Nothing too exciting; not that I paid for except the books.

**Ben:** Okay, okay, interesting. I was hoping you were going to share like a quantitative analysis of different essays and... But anyway, so, now you took the exam previously. Did you take it before-- how many times did you take it before doing the computer-based one?

**Dmitry:** I took my first IELTS exam like 3 years ago when I was first considering my options in terms of Masters and by the time I actually applied, my previous IELTS certificate expired. So, I had to retake the exams. I first took it one and a half months ago, maybe two months ago. I don't remember the exact dates. I believe it was late February.

Due to the requirements of my program, I had to score at least a 7 in total, the band score and 7 in each part. So, essentially, the only requirement was 7 in each part, which was quite difficult for me because my writing is not perfect. It's very difficult for me to stick to the required structure.

Basically, I failed my writing part when I first took the exam in February. I had 9 in reading and listening then I had 7.5 in speaking which was barely enough and 6.5 in writing, which was not enough for me. So, when I received my scores, I realized that I will need to retake the exam.

**Ben:** Interesting. 9s, congratulations; the reading and listening and you got that through--

**Dmitry:** It was a really weird feeling to score 9 in two parts and still fail because it was not enough.

**Ben:** Yes, that is quite a steep slope between those two scores. How did you get the 9s in the listening?

**Dmitry:** Well, I believe that listening was probably the most, the easiest part for me just because I have a lot of practice, a lot of experience like I listen to a lot of English speaking shows, some English speaking podcasts, I play video games in English.

So, I have a lot of different accents I listen to. I didn't feel like it was very challenging in terms of listening. Frankly, I didn't spend a lot of time specifically preparing for the listening and reading parts. I know my weak spots. I know that I lack skills in speaking and writing parts, so these were the main parts I was preparing for.

**Ben:** Interesting. So, you would say that you're pretty much immersed in English all the time like with your media, with your reading, listening.

**Dmitry:** Yes, yes, pretty much. I think that creating this English speaking environment around oneself is the easiest way to learn the language, not just prepare for IELTS, but learn the language. When my friends ask me, "I want to learn English. Where do I start? What do I need to do?"

I always answer that you just need to start using it. You need to start watching your favorite show in English, subtitles in your native language. You need to switch interfaces in the programs you use on your computer or on your cellphone to English.

It's not difficult and these are very familiar things. You already know all these functions in your web browser. You already know the words that the characters are saying on your favorite show. These things are very easy. You just need to decide that you want to create this environment around yourself.

**Ben:** Absolutely. Dmitry, how long have you been immersing yourself in English?

**Dmitry:** I would say for five years maybe. At some point, I started to work a job that required me to use English a lot and it's been a communications-related job. So, at some point I had to use English a lot. Since then, I just never switched back.

**Ben:** Interesting. Yes, I realized this when I was learning Spanish that once I started using the language on like a daily basis and especially for work, then there was a big leap in improvement with my language skills. Going back to IELTS, you did the reading and the listening, as you said, and you did them on the computer. Can you explain how that happens for the listeners?

**Dmitry:** Well, first of all, I had to explain why I decided to switch to the computer-delivered test. Actually, it was not like a conscious decision at first because when I realized I had failed my first exam and I decided to retake it.

I didn't have much time to prepare and I didn't have time to wait for the actual results and one of the main selling points for the computer-delivered IELTS is that the results arrive much, much earlier than for the regular one. In the regular one, you had to wait for I believe 13 days or 14 days. I believe I waited for 13 days.

In the computer-delivered IELTS, they advertise that they will send the results in 5-7 days, but I actually received the results in the morning on my fourth day, so very, very early because-- I had to take this option just because the deadlines in one of the programs I was applying to were approaching and I just had to send all my documents on time. So, I had to take this option, but I was very glad I did.

Regarding your question how the listening and reading parts work and how are they different from the pen-and-paper based IELTS. Actually, they are not very difficult. You work with exactly the same kind of questions, exactly the same structure of your tasks.

The texts in the reading part are the same. The speeches in the listening part are-- absolutely everything is the same. The only difference is that you work with the IELTS interface on your computer. I was also not sure if the interface works, if everything is as intuitive as I wanted it to be, but everything is very intuitive. If you ever worked on a computer you will not have any issues with that.

Also, on the official IELTS website, you can find the examples of these questions and the examples of the interface for each and every type of question. If you're unsure, if you want to prepare for this kind of things, they have tons of materials on the IELTS website. You can just google something like IELTS computer questions or something like that and I believe you will find it quite easily. The listening and reading parts are absolutely the same as the regular is.

**Ben:** Do you have to pay extra to do the computer one?

**Dmitry:** Yes, actually that's quite unfortunate. The regular one is I believe something around \$200 these days and the computer-based is \$300. So, it's noticeably more expensive.

**Ben:** Definitely, yes. Now, let's move on to the writing. What I wanted to know was when you were-- no, just one question on the listening. Do you get the headphones and you just put the headphones on and then work through the text?

**Dmitry:** Yes, yes. You have your individual headphones and the sound quality is-- for me at least it was even better than in the regular IELTS exam. It was acceptable. It was fine in the first exam I took, no problems with that, but the second one, the computer-delivered one, it was even better and you have volume control, no problem with that.

Also, they give you the time to test your sound quality, so no problems. By the way, I remember that there is one difference between the computer-delivered one and the pen-and-paper one in the listening and reading sections. You have exactly the same amount of time, but you don't get any extra time they give you in the pen-and-paper one to transfer your answers to the answer sheets because you don't have an answer sheet.

You've already answered on your computer. It's not like it's a problem. I will say it's even easier because of that, but the time controls are slightly different in the reading section. That's the only section it applies to and you need to be aware of that. They tell you about it, but just keep that in mind.

**Ben:** Excellent. Thank you for that Dmitry. Now, let's move on to the writing. Let's first of all talk about what happens and then we'll talk about some of the differences and possibly the advantages. So, what happens when you go into the exam room? Are you using the same computer for your listening, reading and writing?

**Dmitry:** Yes, yes, you like-- very smooth. It's just two or three minutes between each part and just exactly the same way it works in the regular IELTS.

**Ben:** Right, okay, got you. So, you see the question on the screen and then you can just type in or can you make a few notes and brainstorm ideas and stuff like that?

**Dmitry:** Yes, you can brainstorm, you can try things and I would argue that it's much easier than in the regular IELTS because for me, at least, the main challenge of the writing section is time. I struggle to write enough words, I struggle to keep my handwriting readable while being constrained by these time limits.

When I finish my essay, I usually have like 3-5 minutes left to read it and correct my mistakes. Last time when I had the pen and paper oral exam, I had exactly two minutes left. So, I didn't even have enough time to read my essay in its entirety. I just had to look through it like one or two mistakes. That's just definitely not enough.

I'm not saying that the test format is wrong. I'm just saying that I struggle to achieve my goals within these limits. That's why my score was 6.5. I believe I deserved it because there were definitely issues with the composition of my essays and the spelling and punctuation. I believe there were many mistakes. I'm absolutely sure of it.

When I switched to the computer-delivered IELTS, these problems were just gone, at least for me, because my handwriting is much, much slower than my typing speed and when I worked on my essays, I didn't have any problems writing enough words. I believe I had something like 180+ something words in the first task and then more than 270 words in the second task.

**Ben:** Dmitry, can you see your word count as you're writing or you're just...

**Ben:** Yes, that's another thing that is very good about this IELTS. You don't need to count words. You don't need to count lines. You always see this number at the bottom of your screen showing how many words you have. That saves quite a lot of time because I was unsure about my word count.

I didn't want to write too many words to avoid making unnecessary mistakes and I definitely did not want to write below the required amount in the pen-and-paper one. So, I had to recount my words at least twice and I wasted a tone of time and that's not something you want to do.

In the computer-delivered IELTS, that's not a problem at all. You always see the timer, you always see the word count and the only thing you need to worry about is your essay and what you're going to write. So, when I finished my work, when I finished my essays, these two tasks, I had like 18 or 20 minutes left to correct my mistakes or to adjust wording or to work on my paragraphing, whatever.

**Ben:** Interesting. So, when you see the question and you're thinking of ideas, where do you put your ideas? Do you just type them or can you put them on a pen and paper next to you while you organize your thoughts?

**Dmitry:** You have a piece of paper and a pencil, more pencils if you need to-- if you need them. I never used those. I already have a field where I can type whatever I want and I type much faster than I write hence why would I use that? But you have this option if that's how you want to work. I would not advise you to do this.

**Ben:** Okay, because when I write the essays, I like to just brainstorm ideas pen and paper and then draw arrows and put numbers on them and then transfer that onto the computer, you know, but I think it goes back to something I have mentioned previously in other podcasts is like you need to find the method that works for you.

In your case, you knew exactly that pen and paper for you, from the middle age-- from the dark ages and you're much more competent and much more fluent with the computer. I would be exactly the same, Dmitry. As soon as-- I wrote a handwritten letter the other day and it took me forever and I ended up changing pens because I started with a pencil then I changed to a pen and I was like it was just taking too long and then my handwriting was just disgraceful and I was thinking yes...

I know if I took the IELTS test I would definitely do it on a computer, which brings me to the next point. Can you copy-paste? Obviously, you can't open Wikipedia and then copy-paste it, but can you within your own sort of text window, can you reorganize the sentences and maybe copy a sentence and then paste it and then alter it and stuff like that?

**Dmitry:** That's a very good question and to be honest, I don't know the exact answer. You can reorganize your essay in a way that you can insert parts or a phrase in the middle of it or you can adjust paragraphing.

Can you like copy the second paragraph and paste it as the forth, for example, I don't know. I never actually tried that and I'm not sure that works because your options when it comes to editing are obviously limited and I never tried this in sec one.

**Ben:** Okay, I was just wondering because sometimes I've written an essay and I've thought that sentence would be much better in the conclusion, for example, and then just having that-- specially if it's a really good sentence, it's just handy to copy-paste that obviously, when you work in Microsoft Word or Google docs, but in the exam, it's going to be a completely different situation.

This is really good. You just-- going back to your exam day, you started the writing and then you just wrote it from beginning to end. From introduction, body paragraph one, body paragraph two, and then conclusion. You just went straight through like that, direct.

**Dmitry:** Well, everyone works in his own way. That's not usually how I work. I usually write a phrase or two for each paragraph like the main idea or the first sentence and I create something like a plan with a basic structure. It's more detailed than the basic plan.

It has one or two sentences for each paragraph. I create these first and then I start to add details and work on wording for each paragraph separately. So, I don't write it from the top to the bottom in one sitting. I create a structure first.

**Ben:** Excellent. Interesting. You said that you never used the pen and paper that was next to you when you were planning your essay.

**Dmitry:** No, no. I never use those. I use pen and paper in the reading section just because there is no way to mark the questions that you have concerns or are unsure about. So, when I was working on the reading section I was writing down the numbers of questions that I wanted to go back to later. That was the only point where I used my piece of paper.

**Ben:** Interesting. Fantastic. Well, I think that's everything now, Dmitry. I don't have any more questions. Do you have anything more you'd like to add to tell the students? Would you recommend doing this computer-based test then?

**Dmitry:** No, I don't think so. I just want to say again that if you have the money and if you're considering this option, you should definitely try it. For me, it helped me to improve my writing score from 6.5 to 7.5 basically in two weeks.

I did some preparation for the writing test in this time of course, but nothing too drastic, nothing special. I believe that just the test format helped me to score at least a point five higher. Yes, if you have fast typing speed, definitely try it. I would advise it.

**Ben:** Yes, I know from training a lot of students and helping a lot of students that a lot of them get mixed up. I know when I've written an essay on pen and paper that I wanted to reorganize my thoughts and just move an example that I've written and put it into my first paragraph and stuff like that.

I think I would definitely agree with you that if you're a student who struggles with organizing your ideas or if you're a student who writes slowly or who's got messy handwriting, then I'd definitely consider the computer-based IELTS test.

Like Dmitry said, you can go to [ielts.org](https://ielts.org) and search on Google and you can find all the resources that the official organization has distributed and given out to help students make the decision. I think that's everything now. Do you have anything that you'd like to add or shall we finish there, Dmitry?

**Dmitry:** No, I could only wish good luck to IELTS students and IELTS test takers. You can do it so--

**Ben:** Fantastic.

**Dmitry:** --good luck.

**Ben:** Excellent. I was hoping you would say that. If you had just said, "Nope," then it would have been an interesting way to put it. Thank you very much, Dmitry.

**Dmitry:** Thank you.

**Ben:** Dmitry, just before we finish and this will probably be released in about two weeks, I just need to ask-- I should have done this in the beginning, but I forgot. I was involved with the technical problems, but are you okay if I use this online, if I use this for online marketing, if I use this on my website and stuff like that? Is that okay?

**Dmitry:** Yes, absolutely. That's why we did it. Just drop me a link on Reddit and I will see it.

**Ben:** Will do. Okay, super. Well, thanks again and I'll send you the link over via Reddit once it's published and yes, be ready for this global stardom that's approaching you. Okay, Dmitry. Take care.

**Dmitry:** Okay, good luck. Bye.

**Ben:** Bye.

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