

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. In this tutorial, we are going to focus on IELTS speaking and we will specifically look at part 2 and part 3. We will look at recent questions seen on the exam and in April and I will give you full answers, sample answers and afterwards and probably beforehand as well, I will highlight some of the features that I'm going to use and give you an explanation as to why.

When you're listening to this podcast, pay attention and write down some of these terms because they will help you. Also, I'm going to give you a little bit of advice on how to get back to the cue card if you go off topic, you know, how to get back to the card if you're going off topic, details, and examples. Let's jump straight into it.

We've got a recent cue card, as I said, and this is, "Describe a place in your city that you would like to visit." Just as a side note, being able to describe places and people is a very, very useful skill to have because it's very versatile and you can rely on your vocabulary or your phrases to get out of a lot of situations and also just invoke and include these situations even if they weren't requested. So, let's go.

"Describe a place in your city that you would like to visit. You should say where it is, what people do there, how you know it, and explain why you want to go there." I'm going to use a few phrases. One of them is 'apparently'. We use apparently when you've been told something although you're not certain it's true. I'm going to use that in my explanation because I'm not sure it's a fact what I'm talking about apparently.

Then some vocabulary. Also, another structure we can use is although. I want you to listen to a phrase because this phrase that I will give you, you can use in pretty much any speaking exam. Also, I will give you an anecdote so you can hear an example of an anecdote and that's about my mum. Also, just a little bit of vocabulary like hobbies and interests. Let's jump into it.

Once again, here's a reminder: describe a place in your city that you would like to visit. You should say where it is, what people do there, how you know it and explain why you want to go there. Here's my talk.

"I would love to talk about a place in London. London isn't strictly my city because I'm from the north. However, there is a place that I've been wanting to visit for a long time. It's called the Rooftop Gardens. Apparently, they are owned by a successful businessman called Richard Branson. He apparently got refused for entering this venue because of his looks. So, he returned the next day and bought it.

I think it's a casual cafe and a restaurant in the evening although I'm not entirely sure, to be honest. I think they also might hold private events and parties. I heard it's really popular in London and it's usually full. I also heard it has rather sporadic opening times.

I know about these gardens because my mum went there a few times when she lived in London. She explored a lot of the city and told me numerous times of the new spots she had found. When my mum lived in the capital, she loved exploring it. Every day, she would explore a new neighborhood, a new restaurant or a new museum.

I'd really like to go there because I'm a keen plant enthusiast and there are supposed to be a lot of flowers, tropical plants and exotic trees up there. It's also rather unique to have a large botanical garden on the roof of a skyscraper. Also, this rooftop garden has been on my bucket list for a long time.

I think people go there just to explore, to see something new and also to meet people and as I said before, I think it also hosts private events and parties. That's my talk about a place I'd like to visit. I hope you liked it."

You probably heard I said apparently twice and you might be relieved to know because I have had it happen with my students a lot when they had a word in the head, it keeps coming out. Also when you're writing essays, this happens to me. I'm writing an essay and the word I just want to use it and I'm using it twice, three times. It's not a serious problem because it is natural

although if you can avoid it, it's better because you can't get points for repeating the same phrases or words.

Also, you may have noticed in the anecdote I said-- there's a little bit of repetition. I said the same thing twice and I said it with different words. When I was planning this, I left it in there because my writing brain was saying no, this is redundant. You've already said that information. Go back and edit it out and put something new in because that's what good, succinct, concise, writing is all about. It's avoiding repetition.

However, with the speaking, we can be a little bit more forgiving because at the end of the day although the content is important, when people do talk naturally they will repeat themselves. Also, there was new vocabulary in there. You know where I'm using the past simple I'm talking about a third person. That's why I left it in there and it just kind of expands on the anecdote.

Also, you could probably tell it was slightly off topic, but only slightly because the question did say how I knew about it so I just told of this little anecdote that my mum told me about it when she was living in London. Also hopefully, you've noticed I said "...that's my talk about a place I'd like to visit. I hope you liked it." As you've heard me say before, this is a good way to close that presentation.

Let's jump into part 3. Here, there are three things that I want you to listen out for. The first one is how I reflect the answer. Reflecting the answer is a good idea especially if you are struggling to answer quickly and automatically. Reflecting your answer will give you some-- give you a few seconds to organize your thoughts. It will make sure you are answering in the correct tense. Anyway, I won't go into any more detail about that.

So, the things to look out for: reflecting the answer. Second: an example. Third: some ambiguity. So, I'm saying "it's difficult to say because..." I'm just explaining and I'm using some useful phrases that you could use in your talk, in your speaking class as well, in your speaking exam.

Another example where I put some details of the actual places and then a phrase which is 'personally'. Personally, I love playing squash. Personally, I prefer plants whatever. It's just a nice way to-- it's just a proper way to include some information, more information. Let's go.

Part 3 for the discussion: what kinds of tourist sites are popular in your country? "The tourist sites that are popular in my city are probably the ones associated with Englishness." I'd actually probably go back there and say country. I just caught it there. So, let's start again. If that was the real exam, I would have just said, actually I mean country, sorry.

"The tourist sites that are popular in my country are probably the ones associated with Englishness, so to speak. Perhaps these would include Big Ben, the little tea cottages and of course, Trafalgar Square.

It's difficult to say because I haven't lived there for a while. There are also a lot of areas classed as having outstanding natural beauty, for example, the White Cliffs of Dover and perhaps even the Yorkshire Dales. Personally, I prefer visiting these types of areas in the countryside."

So, here I gave some details there. I didn't go into too much-- I said "so to speak" is when it's not very accurate because Englishness is quite a broad term, so I said, "so to speak". I just added that little phrase on the end there.

Then the example, "perhaps this would include..." It's always good to put an example and also like the writing and when we're giving examples, sometimes we have the opportunity to list and when we do list, listing like three points is usually the right or the best amount of information to deliver-- the three points just stylistically speaking.

Obviously, you're not going to get more marks for that, you're not going to lose marks, but it does sound better than four or two. You kind of get into the rhythm and then we can do one, two, and three.

Next phrase: it's difficult to say because... That's just a neat copy-paste phrase. There I go into an example. I said, "...for example, the White Cliffs of Dover, and perhaps even the Yorkshire Dales..." Those are just two examples there. Details: personally, I prefer visiting these types of

areas in the countryside. There's nothing wrong and it's probably a good idea just to add what you personally think especially if you're worried about the length of our answer.

Next question: What can governments do to prevent pollution in tourist sites? There's a very good phrase we can use here and I'll just say it then I'll analyze the answer and then I'll give my answer. "I've never actually thought about this to be honest. I guess they could..."

You know when you're in an exam and you're just caught blindsided and you're just like, whoa. I never really thought about that question. This is a very useful phrase you can use just to give you a few seconds of thinking time. "I've never actually thought about this to be honest. I guess they could..." and then you give your answer.

This was my honest reaction. When I was preparing for this, I was like I never actually thought about this. I was like, yes, that's the best way to start. Let's go. "What can governments do to prevent pollution to tourist sites?"

"I've never actually thought about this to be honest. I guess they could educate the tourists before they arrive in the area. They can also place more litter bins around the areas. I think also the tourist sites could be better managed. For example, the government could clearly mark the paths to be taken or even limit it to guided tours. This would reduce the amount of people and most like reduce the amount of pollution. It isn't an easy problem to solve."

That's an adequate answer. Obviously, it's not grammatically perfect and some topic-specific vocabulary: guided tours, litter bins. I'm also using the examples and I've got that "I've never actually thought about this, to be honest. I guess they could do this." I'm just hedging it there giving myself time.

Next question: what are the advantages of visiting less known places? "I love visiting less known places. Well, to start with, there are considerably less tourists around. You probably have more chance to meet the locals and even interact with them depending on the languages you speak though.

These areas are probably considerably cheaper too. For example, a few years I went to Lviv in Ukraine and it was extremely cheap. It was a beautiful, beautiful city with hardly any tourists. One last advantage is that in some places, it might hardly get new visitors. So, they treat you really well because you make the effort to get off the beaten track and visit their city.

Straight away I just jumped into this. "I love visiting less known places." Just shows a little bit of enthusiasm, a little bit of emotion and remember the examiner is going to be speaking with 20, 40, 60 people. As I've said before, make the examiner's job easy. Give them reasons to like you.

Nobody likes a boring person. So, if you can just stand out a little bit, add a little bit of charm, show a little bit of character. How do you show character? Well, you show what you're interested in. There's that old phrase in English: be interesting, be interested. It basically means just get a passion. Get something that you like and for me, it's traveling and it comes through with this answer. "I love visiting less known places."

Then I'll go on to give my reasons then I'll give an example and then I'll signal to the examiner as well and that I'm finishing. One last advantage-- Also some decent vocabulary there. I'm talking about getting off the beaten track. I'm talking about new visitors. I gave the details about the characteristics of the city that I liked in Ukraine.

If there's a topic that you like, if you're lucky and you get a topic that you like, jump into it and use that topic. You could even exaggerate a little bit. If the examiner asks you, "What could governments do to reduce pollution?" like the question we just had.

"I love any project related to reducing pollution. I think the world is in a dangerous situation at the moment. So, just to go back to your question about what the governments could do, well, they could put litter bins around the cities. They could start an education campaign..." You see? Try and inject a little bit of emotion if you can.

Next one: what are the disadvantages when there are too many tourists in one site? Here's my answer and this is quite a personal answer and there's nothing wrong with this at all. "I can

relate to this question a lot. Back in 2005, I went to Budapest for the first time and they were hardly any tourists and the place was extremely cheap.

About 13 years later, I returned and a lot of the young local people had moved to Germany or the UK for work, prices have increased, and the city was packed with tourists. Restaurants were full every weekend and the popular streets were teeming with tourists.

For me personally, it felt like a completely different city. So I guess that the disadvantages of too many tourists in one place can be the overcrowding, can be the increase in prices. I guess also it could really alter change the local culture."

So there we go. Once again, I gave the list in three when I was talking about how it changed. I said a lot of young people had moved out, prices had increased and number three, the city was packed with tourists. I also went on to explain that the restaurants were full and just to make sure that the examiner didn't mark me down, I brought it back to the question and I just gave a quick summary of my own answer and just put it in general terms.

So I just dived into this with a personal anecdote and then brought it back and reminded the examiner that I'm going to get full points because I'm going to talk about it in general terms as they asked. A quick summary, some useful phrases, some useful advice.

1) Do your lists in threes. 2) If you're not so sure, you can say that. You can say, "I guess it's like this," and then speak hypothetically which will probably involve using the conditional. "I guess it would be rather packed. I guess it would be rather interesting." If you're not so sure, just use those phrases.

Also, some other advice I've been saying is give examples. Second piece of advice or fourth whatever number I am, use some of the topic-specific examples. Don't be afraid to show emotion. Obviously, we don't want to go over the top of this, but show some character and talk from a personal point of view as well.

Also, make sure you're using some of these conjunctions: "although it is like this..." or "however, I did think it was like that..." Next cue card, let's jump into this. I'm going to repeat

some of the advice that I'd given you before because I want you to remember it and as we all know, repetition is the mother of all learning.

I recently found out that that phrase comes from Russia actually and I was surprised when one of my Russian students actually-- he said it and he said it quite happily and then later I found out that it was from Russia. So, it was kind of the penny drop, so to speak. I kind of realized why he was quite pleased with that phrase.

Cue card number two: talk about a subject that you used to dislike but have an interest in it now. Please say what subject is it, why you didn't like it and why you are interested in it now. Let's jump into this. "I'd like to talk about learning German at high school. We had the option to choose French or German. I chose French and I think everybody chose it. Because my surname ends in W, I think I was at the end of the list and so ended up having to do German.

I disliked it for quite a few reasons. Firstly, I was forced to study it. Secondly, I disliked the sound of the language and finally, all my friends were in the French class. I was silly though because I ended up studying it for about five years and did the bare minimum each year. I really regret not putting in any serious effort.

I can remember bits and bobs now like the days of the week and certain phrases. I memorized how to say I'm an only child. This way a teacher would stop asking me questions about my family and things like that. Incidentally, I have a brother and sister.

I'm interested in it now because I have friends in Austria and Germany. I also believe I could pick it up relatively quickly too. I'd like to read some German literature too; perhaps the books written by Michi and that's my talk about a school subject."

Once again, it was quite personal there. There were lots of little personal anecdotes, little stories about how I ended up in the class, another story about what happened in the class, I just learned phrases. This is true actually. When I was in my German class, I learned phrases like "I don't understand," and "I'm an only child," just so the teacher would stop asking me questions.

I could have gotten into that in more detail quite happily. However, it wasn't the time and the place. I just wanted to keep it much more formal. It's still quite personal and also I am interested in it now. Also, as you probably heard, I closed with "that's my talk about a school subject."

I gave quite a few reasons. I gave three reasons why I disliked it and I just did firstly, secondly, and finally. It's quite emphatic. It's quite clear that I was against studying this language. That's the talk and it was very personal because it's asking me now why I didn't like it. It asks me, "Talk about a subject you used to dislike and you have an interest in now." Obviously, I'm going to talk about school, my school, my childhood.

Next question: follow-on questions. "What subjects did you like in school?" "I absolutely loved economics. I think it was because the teacher was excellent. His name was Mr. Sykes. He brought the subject alive. He had such mental clarity when he taught it. I was really impressed. He even taught us material not on the curriculum because he thought it was important for us. That's a good teacher."

I could have easily said-- the question, "What subjects did you like in school?" "I liked German-- I didn't like German. I liked Math, History, and Economics. The teachers were really good. History is very important and Economics I liked a lot."

No, that's a terrible, terrible answer. I jumped into this because I had a vivid memory, almost like a flashback of my Economics teacher, Mr. Sykes, who was very strict. Everybody was scared of him, but he was a fantastic teacher. He was tall, a bit fat, massive presence, bold, but the way he explained stuff you had no question in your mind about whether he knew the subject or not. It was amazing and this is what I wanted to project when I was explaining this answer.

I didn't just say the subject. I said the subject, I said why, because. I talked about Mr. Sykes. I talked about mental clarity and I even said he even taught us stuff that we didn't need to know for exams because this is how good a teacher he was.

Once again, I'm showing character. I'm jumping into this. I'm just trying to recall all these useful reasons why I liked him. When I was preparing, I had this picture of him in my mind because I can remember it so clearly.

Examiner at this point, as you probably realize, starts to take the questions from personal, which is like your part 2 to a little bit more general and abstract. For example, in the next question, "Is learning many subjects at once good?" You see? We're moving now from me personally and we're talking about abstract things.

My answer-- the question: is learning many subjects at once good? "It's difficult to say. On the one hand, you get a taste of lots of different subjects. So, I guess later you can specialize, but on the other hand, if you already know what you enjoy you're wasting a lot of time learning about things you dislike or probably never use. I guess if you're indecisive, it's probably valuable otherwise it might be a waste of your time."

I'm just showing both sides of the issue here and my vague or inconclusive summary is "I guess..." So, you can probably tell that when I was answering this I wasn't very committed to an answer. That's okay because I did show both sides and I've used some good phrases like it's difficult to say. I kept using I guess.

As I said, it's like when we want to just suppose or we want to just not suppose when we just want to guess, when we're not 100% certain. We just want to estimate. Then at the end, I said "I guess if you are indecisive it's probably valuable. Otherwise, it's a waste of your time." Otherwise is another good phrase that we can use instead of saying although because hopefully, we've used although once and otherwise is-- we can show both sides. It's quite a good conjunction to put in there.

Next question: is it better to learn one subject at a time in your opinion? Very similar to the other one. Very similar to the earlier question. "Is learning many subjects at once good?" Next question: is it better to learn one subject at a time in your opinion? The more advanced speakers will be using different vocabulary than they used previously and they'd have also

added their own opinion. The way I interpret this is talking about myself personally and how I learn. Let's jump into it.

“Is it better to learn one subject at a time in your opinion?” “Yes, I think so. If I look back at anything that I ever succeeded at it was because I was focused. For example, when I left Manchester and started to learn Spanish, that's all I did. I just learned Spanish all summer. By the time the university started, I was more than prepared and all my friends who spent the summer in the UK were really impressed. So yes, I think one subject at a time is the best way to progress.”

Just going back, personal anecdotes... I could have really gotten into the mechanics about why focusing is much better. However, it's not really the time and place and I don't really need to show the examiner a serious broken down explanation, but I will share with you guys because it is a very good learning technique.

When you're focusing on just one subject, for example, English and this is especially true when you're learning the language, if you're just focusing on learning English and you're studying a lot and you're studying fast, and you're doing lots of work quickly for example, I always encourage the students on the online course to write their essays, send them in and then when I send them the corrections back I say get your next ones in 24 hours.

Quick, quick, move, move, move because the faster you move, you're going to cover more distance which in language probably means more words and you're going to increase the likelihood of seeing that word again. The more times you see it, the more likely you are to remember it.

This is why I think with focus, we're getting on that path of moving fast and covering more distance rather than doing for example 10 minutes of Russian, 10 minutes of German, 10 minutes of French, 10 minutes of Spanish. That's just ridiculous.

That was an exaggerated example, but even though I could have answered or could have given that answer to the examiner, I didn't because I wanted to just-- I didn't need to give an answer

that showed the whole logic and a very sound argument. I played it safe and I just gave a personal anecdote about my situation, about what happened to me. Bear that in mind.

If the examiner asks you a topic that you know a lot about, don't take the bait to show your intelligence. Resist that and the same with the writing. It's probably more true with the writing especially if you've studied that subject and you know the subject inside out in your own language. Then you might be tempted to show that knowledge through your writing. Avoid that. Just go for simple arguments. Anyway, let's move on.

“Do you think teachers should have entertaining teaching styles?” Here's my answer. “This is a very sensitive subject. A teacher may think they are entertaining, but it could be borderline ridiculous with the other party. At high school, I heard about a teacher called Mr. Trey who would lock naughty students in a cupboard.

I don't know if it was the discipline or entertainment, but I don't think he was allowed to continue. So I guess it really depends. If they can be certain it is entertaining then yes, they can do it. Otherwise, they should probably tread very carefully.”

Reasonable answer there. I'm using a conjunction 'otherwise'. I'm using 'I guess' because it's not something I can talk very authoritatively about, you know, having entertaining teachers. I used some good vocabulary there like borderline ridiculous. Instead of saying almost ridiculous, I said borderline ridiculous. It's probably a little bit closer than 'almost'.

Once again I gave an anecdote. I told a little bit of a story and that story I used just to illustrate my argument, to illustrate my points. It's very similar to the writing. You can give an example or anecdote. Obviously, we have to adapt it to the writing to make it a little bit more formal, but you state your claim, you give your reasons and your reasons could be reasons as they are, maybe you want to demonstrate or force those reasons with an anecdote, an example or some details and then we kind of summarize at the end.

“So, I guess it really depends if they can be certain it is entertaining otherwise they should probably tread very carefully.” I'm just going for a very natural exam here. If it's a subject I like,

I'm going to say I love traveling to foreign countries. I love it when governments try and handle issues regarding pollution.

If I'm not so certain, I'm going to hedge it and I'm going to say well, it's difficult to say to be honest or I'm going to say I guess it could be like this or I could say I never actually thought about this, to be honest. I guess they could... It's difficult to say. So, there are lots of phrases we can use if we are caught short; that means if we are a little bit unprepared or if we're not so sure.

Also, there's that technique that I said right at the beginning which is just reflecting the question and giving yourself time to think of an answer. Also, if you're doing the writing course with us, then you could probably use the similar structure that we teach for our essays in your answers.

So, obviously we're not going to use it as rigidly, but we can use that structure that I was talking about earlier where we kind of give our opinion then we give a reason then we back it up with an anecdote, story, details, examples, and then maybe a summary.

Word of warning: in the writing follow it religiously. There are all the sentences you need to do it and there's the tutor giving you feedback on this as well, which is paramount. With the speaking, roughly follow that structure. You don't have to but it's a good structure to follow. It's a good structure to give more complete answers and also you're going to force yourself to give more complete answers if you're broadly following it.

That's everything from me today and I've just got three things that I'd like to ask now. 1) If you know anybody who is studying for IELTS, then send them this podcast, send them the URL, get them on board as well, give them a hand.

Second thing, if you could go over to this post and like it that would be fantastic. If you just put it into Google IELTS speaking or sample recent questions and sample answers and give us a like or share, something like that or a thumbs up on YouTube, subscribe to our YouTube channel as well.

The final thing is if you are-- if you want some IELTS materials, then go to ieltspodcast.com and you'll see that lovely popup everybody loves and leave your email there and we'll send you over that material. Also, there's a special offer for people who do sign up. It's only on the confirmation [unintelligible 00:38:55.14].

That's everything from me. Have a fantastic week and all the best with your IELTS preparation. Take care.

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