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Ben: IELTS Speaking: Talk about your past fluently for IELTS part 1. In this tutorial, you will learn how to use present perfect versus the past simple and this will help you in your IELTS speaking exam because you will learn how to use a mixture of simple and complex structures to score a band 6 or higher.

Now, obviously, a lot of you will be aiming for a 7 or higher, but obviously, if you are aiming for a 7, you might be having a 6 or 6.5 already. So, this will be helpful to help you just review the basics. Review the foundations.

Now then, in part 1, there may be a few times or there probably will be actually quite a few times when the examiner is going to ask you about your past, okay? What music did you like growing up? What was the last book you read? Tell me about your first teacher and because of this, it's essential that you know how to speak about your past fluently.

Now, there are quite a few tricks and tips out there for talking about the past in an interesting and complex ways. One way is the-- one of these tools is to master the use of past simple and present perfect. Now, I've spoken with students and with very high levels in English, but they



still sort of like mess up the past simple or the present perfect and they mess it up because they don't pay any attention to it because they say this is really simple and it's such a shame because unless you've got these small parts under control, then you're not going to be able to the next one.

Now, these two tenses are among the first things that an examiner will check. If you've got difficulty-- if you've experienced difficulty using these tenses early on in the exam then the examiner might think that you're going to be a low scoring candidate. So, this is why it's very important to use these-- to master these tenses consistently, feel comfortable with them and this way, you're going to sound more natural.

Now, this is one of the first tenses the students use; the past simple. Now, we use the past simple to talk about anything that is most likely ended, okay, or it isn't connected to now. So, we could say something like I went to a concert last night. I played tennis when I was young. I lived in Italy in 2001.

In these examples, it's pretty clear that it's ended-- the event has ended. For example, the concert last night or I played tennis when I was young. It's clear that the speaker does not play tennis now. You see?

Now, and it's quite simple to form the past simple. Usually, the regular form of the verb takes -ed at the end and when it ends with a strong consonant, something like a 'k' or I don't know,



for example just a 'k' we can usually use get away with pronouncing it with a soft 't'. So, for example, she baked cakes. It is a -ed sound, but it sounds like a 't'. So, we can say she baked cakes. In those two cases, you probably didn't hear the difference.

Also, there are the irregular ones, of course. I go to the market. I went to the market. I live in China. I lived in China. That last one was regular. So, yes. I would consider just reviewing those and I think the best way to review is not with a list in front of you, but just talk about your past, record it and then check if you're getting them right. If you're not getting them right, then obviously you need to go and review.

So, how do we use these? How do we use past simple in part 1 of the exam? Well, you should listen for hints from the examiner. By this what I mean is that they will possibly start asking a general question such as what is your favorite color and will follow up with a question about the past as in did you like this color when you were young?

Look out for this pattern and listen carefully to any time markers. So, words like-- phrases such as when you were young or before or last. So, the examiner might say do you work? You say yes, I work in a restaurant in town. Examiner: What was your first day like at your job? Candidate must say it was very difficult. I arrived late because I got lost and my boss was very angry. Honestly, I felt so embarrassed. You see? All of the question there was answered in the past and I identified the correct tense that the question was asking me.



Now then, and it's really important that you have to identify the tense of your question. Just goes back-- I just got a memory now of when I would be organizing classes with my Spanish students, the private ones and I would say, which one do you prefer; Tuesday or Thursday? And they would say yes and they would be like no, no, no, no. Tuesday or Thursday? Yes, yes, yes, yes.

This is clearly a listening question. It wasn't related to the tenses, but it was an issue regarding the listening and this is why I said before that you can interpret the speaking exam as a listening exam and the writing exam as a reading exam because in the writing you have to read the question carefully to make sure that you are answering the question on topic. Likewise with the speaking, you have to pay attention to the examiner and then answer, not only on topic but in the correct tense.

Let's have a look at the present perfect. Now, this is slightly more complex because we have the auxiliary. We have have or had or has-- Sorry. Has or have. Now, the present perfect has two jobs. First, I'll give you the examples. I have seen the movie twice already. She has lived here for three years. We have visited her every day.

So, as I was saying, it's a good idea to think of the present perfect as having two jobs. Number one, to talk about something that is finished sometime before now and something that has



happened from the past up to this point in time. So, if something happened in the past and we want to say that we have done it, then we might use the past simple or the present perfect.

However, we use the past simple if the event or action has ended and we use the present perfect when we don't know the time or it isn't important. For example, I've only been in love once. Or I have been to Paris twice. In both of those cases, the time wasn't important. What is important is that they've happened.

Next one, the next use case is an action that occurred from the past up to now. I have lived in London for ten years. She has been a teacher since 2010. So, in both those cases, we can assume-- in the first case, we can assume that the person is still living in London and in the second one we can assume that she is still a teacher. You see?

So, how can we use this in part 2 or in part 1 of the IELTS exam? Well, we can get the question-- sorry. We can use it in a combination with the past simple. You see? We can use the present perfect as a general introduction and then we elaborate further using the past simple.

So, once again, there is another thing in common we've got with the writing. We can start from general and slowly move it down to the details, more specifics just like we do with the body paragraphs. We start off with the general and then as we go through the middle, go through the paragraph, we are adding more detail.



So, in this case, we're going to do the same, but we can start off with the present perfect and then move into the present simple-- sorry, yes, the present perfect then move into the past simple to add maybe more precise details.

For example, tell me about a time you moved schools. Candidate: Well, I've moved schools about three times in my life, but the last one was the most difficult for me. You see, I lived in a town in Yorkshire etc., etc. So, what I did there is I showed the examiner that I can easily switch between the two tenses and by doing this, I can demonstrate that I've got control over these tenses and ideally the examiner will think that I'm a strong candidate if I can show this control and I can use them both appropriately naturally-- and naturally.

Of course, there are other elements to consider: the pronunciation, the fluency, the grammar, the word choice. All of these are also just as important and this is why it is a good idea to get them all under control before you go to the exam. Now, I'll just mention a few sort of like tips and advices-- pieces of advice before I conclude this tutorial.

So, number one, you can record yourself and try and ask your-- try and use these two tenses specifically and this goes down to a philosophy-- comes down to a philosophy that I've been using all my life is that when it's quite complex, it usually helps to break it down into its smaller components. Break it down into tiny parts just like we've done with this.



So, if you were practicing for the speaking and you wanted to get these two parts under control, then you just focus on these two in your recording and you only pay attention to those. Ignore the word choice. Ignore the fluency. Ignore the pronunciation. Ignore your intonation. Ignore all of those other elements and just listen to-- just listen for the grammar. So, you're breaking it down and just paying attention to that specific part.

Now, another thing you can do is listen to other English podcasts, you know, BBC 6 Minutes is good, comes with a transcript like we do nowadays as well. You can listen to Luke's English podcast. That's very popular and both of those come with a transcript so you can listen and you can start to pay attention when they use past simple, when they use the present perfect and this idea, this methodology you can use as well for the reading.

So, if you are struggling with yes, no, not given, then you just focus on yes, no, not given. Don't do IELTS test listening test after-- sorry, reading test after reading test after reading test. Just focus on the parts that you are struggling with.

So, I went a bit off topic there. So, let's bring it back and let's conclude. So, both part 1 and part 2, probably part 3 as well will require that you talk about the past at some point and if you're going to score a 6 or higher, then you really need to master talking in the past with these two tenses.



As I said, if you break it down into smaller components, you can do this with the conditionals, you can do this with comparisons, you can do this with explanations, just break it down into each area that you want to master and get that small part that you've broken down, that you've identified, master that and then move on to the next one and you will end up slowly but surely improving your English.

Now, if you want to know-- I don't know, if you want a list or an overview of these components, I've mentioned a few here, but we go into it in more detail in IELTS Speaking Confidence Course then go to IELTS podcast have a look at the online courses and the writing course includes the speaking-- well, it can do if you add it to the basket, it's a little bit extra, but have a look at those courses and have a look at the contents of the courses because you'll probably see that it's got a lot of useful chapters in there.

So, that's everything from me today. Have a wonderful day. Keep on preparing for the IELTS exam. Remember breaking it down into smaller bit sized chunks, mastering those chunks and then moving on to the next one is a very effective way to start-- well, to progress and to improve your IELTS score. Also getting feedback will speed this up as well. Listening to more podcasts will help you as well.

So, if you know anybody who's struggling with the IELTS exam at the moment, then send them a link or tell them to listen to IELTS podcast. If you're enjoying these podcasts then please go



over to iTunes and give us a full five-star review and you can even tell Nadyne afterwards what you've done and she'll have a surprise for you.

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So, yes, I think that is everything. Thank you very much for listening. Have a fantastic day and remember you will pass IELTS. You only fail if you give up, all right? Take care and all the best.
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