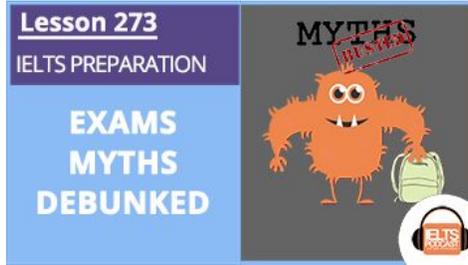


Ben: Hello there, IELTS students. Welcome to IELTS podcast. You no longer have to worry, fret, or panic about IELTS because we are here to guide you through this test jungle. Enjoy these IELTS tutorials and if you need more help or want to access the famous online course, you can visit us at ieltpodcast.com.

INTRODUCTION

Ellen: Hi everybody. This is Ellen and I am back today with another podcast. [This time, I want to debunk some popular myths about IELTS](#). These are myths that I have seen from my experience here at ieltpodcast.com, but also just online and also through students I have had over the years. A lot of themes keep coming up over and over and over again. So, I wanted to address some of them to dispel some of these myths and hopefully, it helps some of you along your way to IELTS.



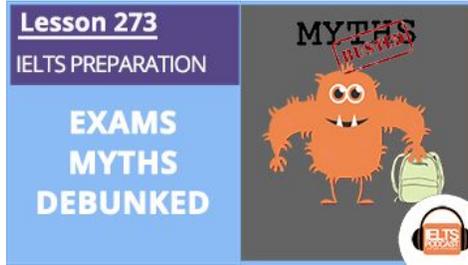
IELTS MYTH # 1: IELTS PREPARATION

I want to look at the test in general. First of all, **let's talk about preparation**. A lot of people think that the more practice tests they do and the more speaking tests they do and the more writing they do, the better off they are. There is some truth to practice makes perfect, but just **taking test after test after test is not the smartest way to go**.

If you don't have feedback and if you don't have support from an experienced IELTS instructor, then you can take tests until the end of time and it's not going to help you. **The idea is for you to learn from your mistakes; number one, and to be able to correct those mistakes and to progress, but not only that.**

Also, it is really important to have a good level in general of English. So, what do I mean? I mean, for example, if you need a band 7, but your English more or less is intermediate level, you're going to have a hard time and no amount of taking tests over and over again is going to help you.

You need to first raise your level of English to the point where you can get a 7 in terms of grammar, in terms of vocabulary, in terms of comprehension as well and then you can start focusing on test-taking skills. That's the first myth I want to debunk.



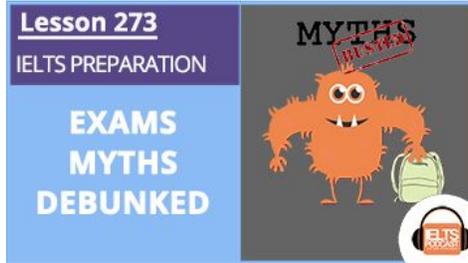
IELTS MYTH # 2: TEST SCORE VALIDITY

The next myth I want to talk about has to do with the **test score** itself. A lot of people take the IELTS test repeatedly and then they get all upset because maybe their previous score was higher than their last score and they say oh no, what do I do? I dropped half a point or I dropped a whole point or I dropped a whole band, for example.

It's not the end of the world provided that your previous score was within the last two years. **You need to remember is that your scores are valid for two whole years.** So, if you have taken the test say, for example, **three times in the past six months, you can use whichever of those scores serves you best. As long as they are less than two years old, you can use whichever is the highest score and which best is in your favor.**

IELTS MYTH # 3: ROUNDING UP/DOWN OF SCORES

Since we're talking about scoring, I want to talk a little bit more about that. Some questions about how the test is actually scored. First of all, **your scores for speaking, reading, writing, and listening, all those four scores are rounded up in order to get your total.** So, for example,



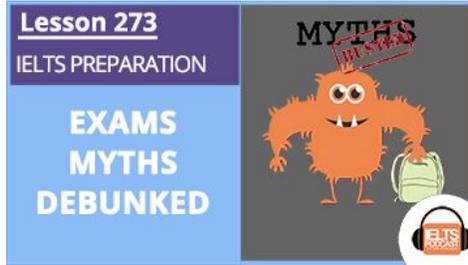
if it's say, for example, a 6.75, **your overall score will be rounded up to a 7** which is great news for a lot of you.

However, what you also need to know is the individual tests, **the individual sections themselves those are not rounded up**. In fact, **they are rounded down**. So, if you get for writing, for example, and this is really common-- Let's see. If you get a 6.75, so you get three 7s, for example, but one 6, guess what happens? Your score is rounded down. So, it goes down to 6.5 instead of going up to a 6.7-- I'm sorry, instead of going to a 7.

So, a lot of people are really surprised by that, but the actual individual sections themselves are rounded down. So, three 7s does not make a 7. In fact, it makes a 6.5. So, that's something I want people to be aware of.

IELTS MYTH # 4: RE-MARK

The next myth I want to debunk is the one about [re-marks](#). If you are one of those people who does get, for example, **a 6.5 in writing, but you get a 7 in everything else then you are the ideal candidate to [ask for a re-mark](#)**. The myth about re-marks is this. **The myth is that it's basically a scam, it's just a way to make money and I want to assure you that that is not the case.**



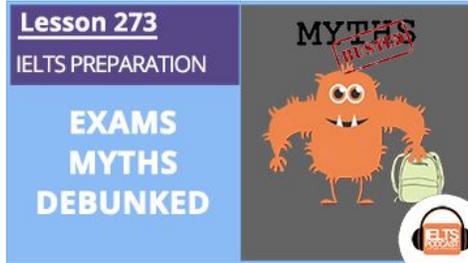
Now, why do I say that somebody who meets these criteria is the ideal candidate for a re-mark? Well, because usually, **re-marks can go up or-- yes, they can go up essentially half a band, not more than that.** So, if you got the band score you need for three of the sections, but your speaking or your writing are half band away from where they are, well then a couple of things are happening there.

First of all, it would not have required a re-mark because, as you guys probably know, **tests are sometimes seen by a second examiner.** The writing and speaking parts are often seen by a second examiner if there is something strange about the scores, but if they are so close together then no. A second examiner would not have seen a test like that.

Therefore, it is in your best interest to ask for a re-mark because it's also well within the examiner's margin of error to be within a band or so. So, it would not raise any red flags, but that kind of a score will really mess up a lot of people's applications whether it's for permanent residency or for a job overseas or for all the reasons people take IELTS.

That's the kind of situation where it's absolutely in your best interest because then it will go to a senior examiner who will then review it, who knows that okay, there's something funny about the score. This person has asked for a re-mark. So, yes. [Do people get their scores raised? Yes, they do.](#)

There's no chance for getting your score lowered, all right? You will either stay the same or it will rise. **If you are a half-band away from where you need to be either in speaking or writing,**



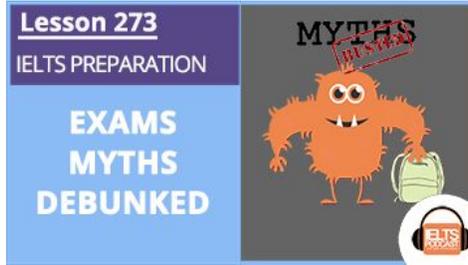
then yes. [Get a re-mark](#) if everything else is fine, but only in speaking and writing and only if it's a half-band because it would be really, really difficult for a senior examiner to raise one entire band.

But if we're talking about a 0.5 difference in speaking or writing then yes, [get the re-mark](#). The idea here in this particular myth is that no, re-marks are not just a money-making scam. They are a valid tool for you to use, but it's important to use that tool wisely.

IELTS MYTH # 5: TEST IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

I'm going on to our next myth. The myth now that I want to talk about is about the **test in different countries and the belief that some people have is that the test is easier if you take it in some countries as opposed to others and there are also some myths about some test centers being easier than others.**

I cannot clearly vouch for absolutely every center and how perfect and spot-on they are. However, I can tell you from my own experience that there is a great amount of effort placed on standardization. Examiners are checked thoroughly and examiners know that they can be checked with every single test that they correct or whatever physical test that they give actually

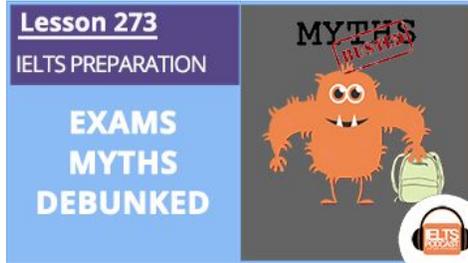


for speaking and so they're really, really, really always on their best behavior and they are all very aware and alert to the fact that someone can be checking their work.

As you know, the speaking test is recorded and you know that multiple people have access to the writing so they can check the examiner's work. Why am I telling you this? **Because there are so many systems in place to make sure that the test is standardized and that's such a priority for IELTS because as you know, it's used for such a wide range of really, really important purposes.**

It's used not only for undergraduate and graduate study but it's used for permanent residency, it is used for professional qualifications overseas. So, there's so much at stake here that the last thing the IELTS people want is for there to be any question regarding the quality and the standardization of the test.

Nobody wants that compromised and therefore, there are a lot of really, really, really rigid standards in place to make sure that every test center is up to standard and that **there are checks happening on the examiners at pretty stable standard intervals.** So, you may not know every single time you are being checked, but you can pretty much be aware that you're being checked at standard intervals.



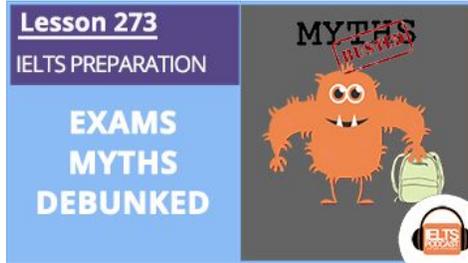
So, no. I don't believe the myth that some test centers are easier than others. They can't be because if that kind of thing were to be happening continuously then something would happen. That test center would eventually be closed. That's one myth debunked.

IELTS MYTH # 6: SPEAKING EXAM

All right. So, now I want to go into specific aspects of the test itself. **I want to start off with speaking and some myths that exist with speaking.** The first one, which as far as I have seen, is the most common myth regarding speaking is about pronunciation and about the accent that people have.

A lot of people think that unless you have a British or American or Australian accent, there's no way you'll get a high score. Well, I want to guarantee you 150% if possible that is just not the case. **You do not need to have perfect British, American or Australian or New Zealand or Canadian accent to do really, really well in the test.**

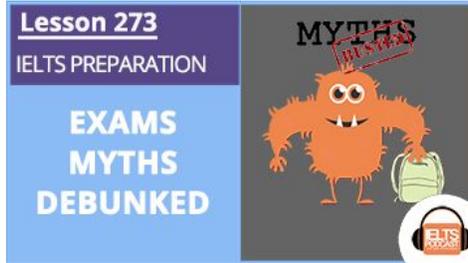
What you need to do and I know that this has been a subject-- a podcast I have done myself in the past and I know there are other ones here at ieltspodcast.com on [pronunciation](#). You need to use a [whole range of pronunciation](#) features to do well in pronunciation. Your accent is just one of those things that you are being graded on.



It's not the only thing. There are things like [intonation](#). There are things like [stress](#); if you know where to **emphasize in a sentence**. So, there are so many different things that can show you speak English to a high level that really whether you sound Australian or Chinese or Indian or Nigerian or whatever, it doesn't really matter as long as the communicative effect of your speaking is clear and it fulfills a lot of the things that you can see that they are being considered.

They are available on the **band descriptors**. The band descriptors, the public version at least, are available on the internet everywhere. So, do look them up to see what you're being graded on. As I have said, I know that I personally did a [podcast regarding pronunciation](#) and what you're actually being scored on. So, if you want, take a listen to that too so you can get all the more information.

But no, you do not need to speak Queen's English. You do not need to sound like Brad Pitt. You can sound like you as long as you use a lot of the other features of pronunciation that are important to **make sure that your speech is clear**. That is the goal here. That's one thing about speaking.

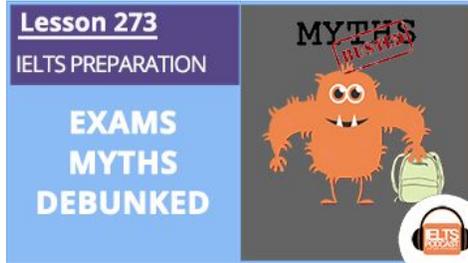


IELTS MYTH # 7: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Another thing that people seem to get wrong is this thing about [first impressions](#). I know a lot of people think it's important to smile and to be polite and to be charming. Yes, those things are great. Those things make the examiner's job pleasant, but I **can guarantee you that the examiner is not grading you on them**. The examiner probably won't even take into account.

Why? **Because the examiner doesn't start to grade you until that timer goes off.** So, the examiner will say a whole bunch of things to you and then you'll see the examiner say something like good afternoon, good morning, good day or whatever and when you see that the examiner has started to time you, **that's the moment from which your speaking is graded; nothing before that.** So, you could have had an entire conversation in absolutely fluent, perfect, and gorgeous English. **It doesn't matter. What matters is only anything you say after that timer starts and after the examiner says good morning, good afternoon, good day or whatever the examiner says to you.**

Does it make a nice impression? Yes, sure. As I said, does it make the examiner's day a little more pleasant if you're charming and funny and polite? Yes, of course, but it's not going to



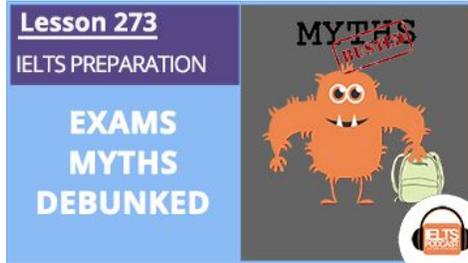
affect your grade. In fact, one thing that I really want a lot of people to know is how important the different elements of the speaking task are.

IELTS MYTH # 8: SPEAKING PART 1

Speaking part 1 is actually probably the least important part of the entire test and as the test progresses, the examiner is paying more and more attention to your speech and is really honing in on what kind of score they are going to give you. **Part 1 is more or less just a way to kind of gauge approximately where you are.**

So, I don't want you to feel like you have to absolutely wow the examiner. It's just to give the examiner an approximation. By the time he or she gets to part 3 will have a generally good idea about what kind of score you will get. In fact, I'm going to tell you something interesting that I have found personally from my experience in IELTS.

People tend to do a lot better in [part 3](#) than they do in part 1. I know that probably sounds strange because part 3 is so much harder than part 1. **I have found from my experience that speakers are so nervous in part 1, they don't have the comfort or the confidence that they have in part 3 especially after that part 2 is over.**



Suddenly, people are just kind of like I feel like a weight has lifted off of me and so they start speaking a lot more fluently and a lot more comfortably, which is great because really the **examiner is paying a lot of attention to what you are doing in part 2 and part 3.**

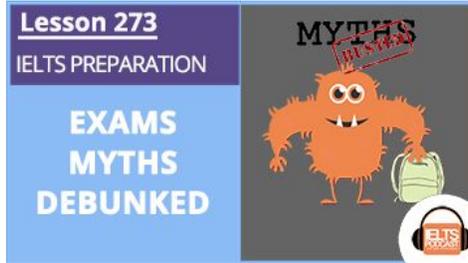
IELTS MYTH # 9: SPEAKING PART 2

One other myth regarding speaking is the time you need to spend in [part 2](#). Everybody knows this lovely idea that part 2 is supposed to be between 1-2 minutes. **I want to debunk that myth. You really want to aim for two minutes.** That's your goal. Don't think okay well I spoke for a minute, that's enough. No. A lot of examiners will make you continue until those two minutes are up.

IELTS MYTH # 10: EXAMINDER CUTS YOU OFF

In fact, that's what they are supposed to do, which brings us to the next myth which is related to this which is if the **examiner cuts me off then that's a problem. No, it's not.**

I would rather that the examiner cut you off because you spoke for longer than two minutes than for you to finish before the two minutes and then have the examiner say to you can you



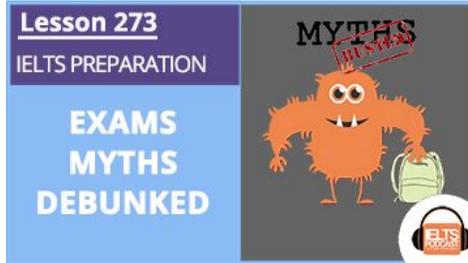
tell me something more about that, please? Because what happens is a lot of candidates get flustered and then are like well, I said everything, what am I supposed to say now?

So, really it's in your best interest to talk and talk and talk and you know what? Let the examiner cut you off. It's not the end of the world. Your goal is not to complete some sort of story that you are telling the examiner. **Your goal is to show the examiner that you are able to communicate fluently without hesitation**, to have some sort of cohesion to your speech, to show good grammar and good vocabulary and all the other things that we have come to know are important in IELTS speaking.

IELTS MYTH # 11: WRITING WORD COUNT

I've talked a little bit about speaking. Now, I want to talk a little bit about myths regarding writing. **The first myth which for me is really, really, important because I see it so many times and I understand the confusion here, but I absolutely do want to clarify this myth. It's regarding the word count.**

A lot of people-- basically, what has happened is this. A lot of people are under the impression that there is a word maximum in IELTS for task 1 and for task 2 and the word maximum is



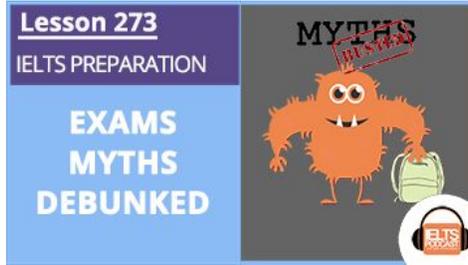
around 260 words. Well, I'm here today to tell you that that is just not the case. **There is no maximum word count.**

There was a word minimum. I don't want to say a lot more about that. There used to be a word minimum. **Everyone knows it was 150 words for task 1. It was 250 words for task 2.** There was never nor is there now a word maximum. Why has this myth come into being? Well, **the myth has come into being because Cambridge English has a word maximum for its exams, which is 10% above the word minimum. So, anything above that would count is just not graded.**

Well, **that's not the case with IELTS** and it's pretty logical as to why because if you look at the band descriptors in task achievement it talks a lot about development; topic development. So, in band 6 you see something about partial development then in band 7 you say yes, develops, but there might be some generalization and then in band 8 you see sufficiently or adequately-- I can't remember the word-- develops the topic.

Then in band 9 you see you know what? This person developed the topic so much there is really nothing else to say about that. Well, that kind of development, honestly, isn't really possible in 260 words. You're absolutely going to need to go over to get to the point where you're developing a topic to the point where there's really nothing else to say about it.

So, there is no word maximum. Write freely, but make sure that you-- **two things; are within 40 minutes for task 2 and also, really importantly you are on-topic.** I think this is one of the



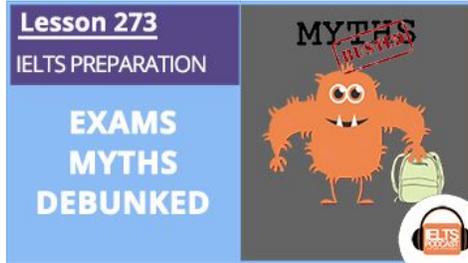
reasons why this myth has really continued to exist and a lot of people support it because they say you know what?

Stay within 260 words because if you go any more above that, you run this risk of going off-topic and I see that a lot with people just going off-topic. They start rumbling. They start writing. They get into this zone and it's great, but it doesn't help their IELTS score because they start going off-topic whereas if you stay within a certain word count, then you're kind of controlling yourself a little bit.

That said, if you don't have this problem and you can write a ton in 40 minutes and you do know how to write and on-topic or smarts then sure, go for it. **Go crazy. Write 300, write 400 words if you can and develop that topic the best you can.**

IELTS MYTH # 12: VOCABULARY

So, let's go to the other myths about writing. One of the myths is regarding [vocabulary](#). A lot of people think I have to change absolutely every vocabulary that I see and I have to use amazing vocabulary that's so high-level the examiner will just scream with joy and say wow! Okay well, not really.

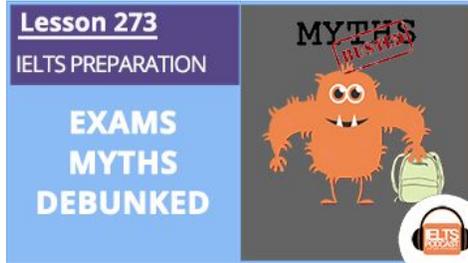


So, here's the thing. First of all, **you don't have to change absolutely every word you see**. So, if you see a word for example that says school, you don't have to make school into center of education. **A lot of times in this effort to provide synonyms what comes out is something really unnatural and it is much more preferable to have something natural and something that provides clarity rather than showing the examiner look how many synonyms I could create for the word school.**

It's not really doing you a service. It just comes out as being unnatural. Are there natural-sounding synonyms for words like school? Sure there are. So, stick to those, but this really concerted effort to just rephrase and reword everything sometimes it's doing a bigger disservice than it is a service.

Regarding using words in the prompt because I think that's part of the problem here. **There has been this myth circulated that you're supposed to use your own words.** You're not supposed to use anything in the prompt. Well, let's understand what is meant by that.

You're not supposed to use chunks of language. You're not supposed to use phrases from the prompt, but if the prompt uses the word adult and you want to use the word adult in your essay, by all means, use it. You can. You can use the word school. You can use individual words. **What you want to avoid is using phrases.** That's where you come into a problem and it shows that you are just copying language from the prompt and not using your own novel and new and fresh language.

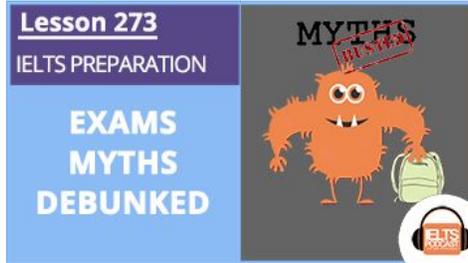


IELTS MYTH # 13: WRITING TASK 1

Let's see. So, I also want to talk about that in terms of **task 1**. You probably want to avoid doing the same thing as far as the prompt is concerned. So, **don't copy exactly what's written in the prompt word for word, but when you have a [diagram](#), yes. You can use the vocabulary actually used to label the diagram. That vocabulary is fine. That's there for you to use. You don't have to rephrase absolutely everything you see there.**

IELTS MYTH # 14: GRADING FOR WRITING

So, I think there's pretty much one other thing that I want to talk about and it was in terms of the **grading for writing**. **There is a myth that the most important thing you have to worry about and the thing that carries the most weight for your writing is task achievement.** My understanding is that this myth has come about because of the way the band descriptors are organized.

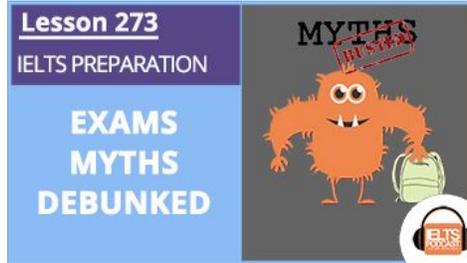


If you look at the table with the band descriptors it shows [task achievement](#) first and then [coherence cohesion](#), then [lexical resource](#), and then [grammar](#). So, some people have this impression that task achievement is the most important thing. It's not. Each one of those criteria are worth 25% of your grade, so nothing is more important than something else.

However, [task achievement](#) is typically a more holistic score and sometimes it covers things like grammar. Sometimes it covers things like coherence and cohesion, so for better or for worse, some of those things kind of overlap. So, for example, if you write a sentence that is incoherent because your grammar is kind of messed up somewhere, that could potentially affect your score in a couple of different places.

So, it could obviously affect grammar, but it could also affect [coherence and cohesion](#) because it's just not a coherent phrase or a coherent paragraph and if it's not clear to the overall meaning of what you're trying to say, it could potentially affect task achievement too. **But is task achievement the most important thing? No.**

However, in my experience, **in my many years of teaching IELTS, it's the place that most people have the hardest time with because they just haven't understood what is being asked of them in the prompt and how to answer the prompt appropriately.**



However, we are here at ieltspodcast.com to help you overcome all of these issues and also [debunk these myths](#) and show you how to progress and how to [continue in your IELTS journey](#). So, that brings us to the end of this particular podcast.

I hope you found it useful. Please [email us](#) if you have any other individual questions about this or any of the information that you heard in this podcast. We'd love to hear your feedback. I want to encourage a lot of you who are now on your path to IELTS to **take a look at the [Sentence Guide](#), the [online course](#) here at ieltspodcast.com**. It's wonderful. **It has a wealth of information I think you guys will find so useful to help you do really well in the exam.**

There are also [essay correction](#) packages that are available. If you need something kind of less intensive, do look at that. I think it will help a couple lot of you as well. We're here-- it's a great team of people working here. So, take a look at that. We would love to help you progress and continue on your IELTS journey. So, good luck and we hope to see a lot of you in the future.

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com