



**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.

## INTRODUCTION

**Ben:** How does an examiner mark your speaking test? In this tutorial, we are going to look at two of the four criteria. The two we will look at today are [fluency and coherence](#) and [pronunciation](#). In this tutorial, you're going to find out exactly how to improve the quality of your speaking and what's more is that you're going to discover what is worth your attention in the speaking exam and what isn't. How good is that?

Hi, there. My name is Ben Worthington from [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com). I'm quite excited at the moment because just before we jump into today's tutorial, there are a lot of things I want to share with you.



## IELTSPodcast APP

Number one, **we've got the [IELTS podcast app](#) that comes with transcripts for each of the audio tutorials**, so you can just read along while you're listening, match the sounds to the words, improve your vocabulary. This just makes it a lot easier. So, you can search for those in the [iTunes store](#) or the [Google Play](#) store. Just put-- I think it's IELTS podcast Ben Worthington or IELTS podcast BW English Services. That's a whole new story. It's something else.

## KINDLE BOOKS

The second thing, **we've got a lot of [Kindle books](#) coming out soon and we've got a very valuable one which basically has a lot of the information from the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free course**. We've put all of that into a Kindle book and it's called Pass IELTS at Band 7, something like that. I didn't want to use the same name, but the important thing is we've got this new book coming out. It's selling on the Kindle platform.

By the way, if you don't have a Kindle, I'd consider investing in one and I wouldn't say buy, I'd say invest because when you make an investment you're expected to get positive returns and

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[How Does an Examiner Mark Your Speaking Test? Fluency and Coherence Criteria Explained \(part 1/4\)](#)

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this is something that like most educational investments, you will get a positive ROI; return on investment. Just like with any investment in yourself, whether it's an investment to pass the exam, to take the exam, these are usually the best forms of investment; investing in yourself.

**SIGN UP TO GET NEW IELTS MATERIALS AND DISCOUNTS**

The final thing that I just want to mention is that also if you [sign up to the site](#) you'll get lots of updates and lots of new material sent to you and of course [discounts, special offers](#), and things like that.

Now, before we jump into this, I just want to mention that I've been exhausted with all these new projects coming out and then I was thinking why am I doing this? Why am I specifically making my life harder? Well, I think it kind of just-- it comes down to three things in life if we just take a step back. We've got our health, our wealth, and relationships.

Those three are probably the most important things and they all need managing 24/7. And then it got me thinking that IELTS is like wealth. IELTS comes under the wealth section of those three categories especially paying the IDP British Council. It's wealth for them, but it's also wealth for you if you are investing in yourself and it also got me thinking further.



I was like okay, why are we taking IELTS? Well, we're taking IELTS to strive for something better, strive for something bigger and I really like this word strive. I think it sums up our community quite well and I think it's only in our community-- we're immigrants or we're going to be immigrants. I've been an immigrant-- I haven't lived in England for the last 15 years, so I'm also an immigrant and it got me thinking.

My great grandparents were also immigrants and I think immigrants kind of make their life or we make our life harder than it has to be and why do we do this? Well, we do this because we want a better life. Our paths have crossed right now because you want a better life. You decided to take the IELTS exam and we're basically making life difficult for ourselves because we want to improve it. We want it to be better. We want a better future and it just goes back to this word strive.

**I think striving, aiming for something better and pulling yourself through to get somewhere else, to get to a better place, I think this is a life skill.** My brother thinks cooking is a life skill and he is kind of right to a certain extent, but he hasn't had this sort of like immigration experience. For him, he has strived in certain areas, but I think immigrants like us I think we really do strive.

We push ourselves and we put ourselves in uncomfortable situations and expensive situations taking the exam and going to a country where we're not native speakers, but I think-- I don't



think, I know for a fact that **all this striving makes you stronger. So, keep striving. Keep pushing forward.**

## FLUENCY AND COHERENCE AND PRONUNCIATION

Right. Let's jump in to today's tutorial. As I said, **we will focus on [fluency and coherence](#) and [pronunciation](#)**; the two out of the four and in the next tutorial, we'll look at [lexical resource](#) and [grammatical range and accuracy](#).

Now, before we start this tutorial, I want to be-- **I want to make you aware that you will be evaluated on your entire performance, not separately for each part of the speaking exam. It's a global evaluation.** The next thing I want to say is that **in the exam, the examiner is going to be listening to you. They will compare your level-- compare your performance to descriptions for each band and these descriptions are basically like the criteria, the framework.** This is what we are going to be diving into today, all right?



## BAND LEVEL

As you know, the band levels go from band level 1 right up to 9 and they can go into those of point five as well. So, you can get 5.5, 6.5, 6, 7, 7.5 and so forth. Now, within the two criteria or within the four criteria we've just mentioned, we can dive down into more elements. So, we have fluency and coherence. Obviously, one part of that is going to be fluency.

So, **this will cover how good you are at keeping talking at the right speed and whether you repeat yourself or whether you hesitate or self-correct.** Now, let's just go into those in more detail. So, the speed; I know that a lot of students-- there are three types of students from my experience.

## THREE TYPES OF STUDENTS

**The one who cannot get started and kind of just freezes up and there are big pauses between each sentence** and this is usually because they are a little bit worried about making a mistake and want to produce a grammatically perfect sentence, which is a shame because it's inhibiting. The insistence on perfection is inhibiting and slowing down the actual fluency.



The second type are the ones that kind of just drag it on and they fill it in with lots of um, well, I used to play the guitar, but nowadays I play the um, um, saxophone. That's really frustrating after a while to listen to and then there are the final ones who just blast you. ...I was recently in Spain... just chitter chatter chitter chatter. Just ... and these types of students usually do not have any problem with fluency, but usually they'll be struggling with the accuracy whereas on the other end of the spectrum we have those who are really obsessed with the accuracy, but lack fluency. Obviously, **the best place to be is in the middle, but speaking at a normal pace.**

## REPETITION

So, the other point regarding fluency is repetition and this will happen if you are a lower level speaking because you do not have that many-- that much ability to say the same thing in different fashions.

The final thing is if you hesitate and this is probably more for the perfectionists who are worried about getting it perfect and then there's the self-correct. By the way-- and the people who self-correct themselves. By the way, it's not bad to correct yourself at the end of the



sentence, but do not retake the whole sentence back and then resay it because speaking doesn't work like that. Speaking is a spontaneous activity.

It's not like writing where we have the luxury of being able to go back and delete it or rub it out and then write it again and construct it in a different way. No, speaking once you throw it out there, it's there forever, so to speak. It's very difficult to take it back and more often than not, it usually ends up more confusing for the listener when you try and take it back. So, avoid that.

Whereas if you just make a slip up at the end of a sentence, for example, if you said my uncle loves a cars-- I mean, my uncle loves cars then it's fine. It's fine; just minor corrections that aren't really going to damage the flow of what you're saying.

## COHESION AND COHERENCE

Next point within the fluency and coherence criteria **we've got [cohesion and coherence](#)**, obviously. **This is basically how good you are at connecting your ideas and using linking words and transitions.** This reminds me of a new product or a new service we are developing and what we're doing is we're trying to make a framework for students to use to give their answers and this is exactly what we do with the writing.



It's very powerful because once you've got this framework and you know how to use it, you just drop in your ideas and hey presto, you've got an essay. We're trying to do the same with the speaking. So far, we've got a few expressions which I will share with you now that really do help.

So, one expression: if my memory serves me well, I did use to play a lot of childhood games. I did use to play with my brother and sister. We'd play board games.... So, if my memory serves me well or if I remember correctly or if I recall correctly that's it, sorry. If I recall correctly, I remember a politician once said that pollution is the worst thing that ever happened-- that has ever happened in our century.

So, this is just little phrases that we can drop in there. Another one is like this would be more useful for part 3. So, for part 3, imagine we get a question like why do you think society operates better with rules? Just these typical abstract questions.

Now, when we've got quite an open question like that, what we can do and this will really help you pick up the points for cohesion and coherence and it just sounds so much more elegant and you can really make it sound natural as well, which is key because we can't just memorize chunks of words and then regurgitate them.

That doesn't sound natural, but this framework, what I'm just about to share with you does help you a lot. So, what you can say is-- so, we've got this question about laws in society and



rules in society. What we can say is well, we can say well, I think rules in society are definitely beneficial and probably for two reasons.

Firstly, without rules it's more than likely we would just descend into chaos and anarchy which is what usually happens in countries that are suffering from wars. Secondly, if you have rules then people know what's expected of them and they know what to do or what not to do. When everybody is on the same page, it just makes the whole operation run better and smoother.

Hopefully, you heard what I did there. I said-- I reflected the answer. I said society is going to be better with rules or society would-- is better with rules because of two reasons. **Firstly, secondly... And this structure, this framework forces you to connect your ideas because you're building up your argument and it's very similar to what we do in the essay writing one.** I still haven't released this framework yet. I'm working on improving it, but it should be coming soon.

So, yes. Just to summarize, [cohesion and coherence](#) how good you are at connecting and linking words and transitions and that's why the framework is good because you force yourself and you link it between your first point and your second point and it just sounds like a better constructed argument, all right?



## COMMON MISTAKES OF STUDENTS

Let's have a look at some common mistakes that students do. So, **they will either answer too much or not enough or they'll speak too slow or too fast because of the stress of the situation. In these cases--** I'll give my suggested solutions for each one in a second.

**Another common mistake is to go back and try and take back the mistakes that you've made** and that's not good because as I said, you can't really go back in time and more often than not, when you try and explain what you just said, you didn't mean it and you wanted to say it that way, it becomes incredibly confusing for the listener and we do not want this.

At the end of the day, this is a communication exam. Language is communication, so obviously, this is a communication exam and going back and trying to correct things obviously hinders your ability to communicate.



## LINKING WORDS

Final thing: **going back to [linking words](#)**. Like is not too bad, it's not perfect. There are different opinions in this. I don't think it's too bad. What is bad is the overuse of like and this happens with-- this is going to sound weird, but if you speak with American girls, I can hear this a lot.

For example, so I was like in Canada and like there're so many moose around and like so many Montana hills in there, Mounties and like, I was just like what am I going to do today? So, I was like I went down to the 24/7... That kind of speech and I've heard this a lot with some students.

You can use it for comparison and as a fill up, just don't overuse it and the same goes for other conversational linkers like you know or-- I can't think of any at the moment, but overuse is the key here. So, I wouldn't worry about avoiding them. Just avoid overusing them.

## TIPS TO IMPROVE FLUENCE AND COHERENCE



Final part now of the tutorial. No, it's not the final part. It's the final part for fluency and coherence. Some tips to improve. **Number one: obviously, you can speak with a teacher or a friend.** When you do this, I would really consider offering some guidance to the teacher. I used to say take control of the class-- take control of the teacher, but it's not going to be very enjoyable experience for them if you're just mandating how to teach you.

What you could easily say is just offer some guidance by saying look, I want to work on fluency. So, if it's okay with you, could you not interrupt me when I give this-- when I'm talking just for the first 20 minutes? And just write down my mistakes. That's all I want. I'm going to work on fluency.

Likewise if your problem is that you don't have a problem with fluency, but your problem is accuracy then tell the teacher and say hey, I want you to interrupt me and stop me every time I make a mistake. Also write it down and we're not going to progress until and unless I'm saying it correctly. Of course, then it's just a case of memorizing them and learning them.

Also, some other exercise is-- and this is from a student who scored very high in the speaking. I think it was something like a band 8. What she did is **she wrote out sample answers for all the cue cards that she could get her hands on.**

What this did-- she did it a couple of days before the exam, but what this did is that then not only did she build and improve and strengthen her idea generation capability but also if that



cue card was going to appear on the exam, then she'd have already thought of an answer. She'd already have a rough idea of how to answer this.

This is another technique we are going to be building into the new [Speaking Confidence course](#) along with the framework. Once we finish the framework, we're going to release it, but this is one of the modules. **You're just going to be writing out your answers and we'll give you feedback on those answers that you've written out and ways to improve them.**

#### MORE TIPS

Next tip: **if you've made a mistake if you can correct yourself quickly that's fine, but don't correct every single mistake.** It's not going to improve your score. Next one: **more is usually better in the speaking exam. A couple of sentences for part 1 because you are-- even in part 1 the examiner is gauging where you are.** The examiner is assessing; is this student a 6 or a 7?

So, **give full developed answers** and I think this is easier in [part 1](#) because you know the topic. It's probably going to be about you like where are you from? Are you a student? Are you working? Do you like holidays? Do you like studying? Do you like games? Do you like sports? Just stuff like this. So, one or two sentences.



This has got to be natural. You don't want to make the examiner work. If you're just giving one word answers, it's not going to be a very enjoyable or productive day for yourself or the examiner, all right?

[Part 2](#): you're going to take notes. You're going to structure your answer and you're going to stay on topic. Here, we must stay on topic; very important. **We also have a system for developing notes and designing your speech or your presentation. We've got a system for making notes on cue cards. It's very effective and we've got to-- this is what we're doing at the moment. We're just linking it into this framework and then that's going to be powerful.**

Next one: in [part 3](#), **we must be aware that in part 3 this is like an open dialogue**, okay? Think of it as a higher-level conversation. **Try and avoid the idea of it being a Q&A. It's a dialogue.** We're both going to be participating. It's going to be going back and forth and you are expected to be doing most of the talking here.

So, this is why it's just good to develop your answers. This is why it's probably good to call on additional frameworks that you might have learned such as-- yes, it's good for quite a few reasons. First, I think it's good for this reason, for example, and also I think in addition to that we could also say this. So, we've kind of used those two points or those two sort of like that structure of giving two points and an example, but we've worded it in a different way, you see?



Now, the examiner might be interjecting with some impromptu questions, but this mainly-- the burden is on you. The role is on you and one of the things we do teaching in the [Speaking Confidence course](#) is to go into details and to give examples. I'm not going to go into it much further because I've mentioned it before and it's also on the course.

Right then, some more points. For [part 2](#), introductions are fine. You don't have to make a massive long introduction, but a reasonably long one is fine. Some other points: some hesitation is going to be natural. Even native English speakers will hesitate. I myself you've probably heard me hesitate at least twice on this tutorial and by the way, my hesitation and my uhm'ing and ah'ring reduced drastically when I improved the quality of my writing and even I was surprised.

**Once I started getting clarity from improving my writing, my thinking improved and logically, my speaking improved afterwards.** I thought that was rather revolutionary, but I can say I honestly think my thinking-- how ironical I'm talking about how sharp I am and I botched it up.

Anyway, but I honestly think that I can articulate myself with a little bit-- not with a little bit, but with considerably more precision and accuracy than my siblings, my brother or sister just because I've developed the skill of writing more concisely and being able to communicate with a pen what I want to say rather than just using speech all the time.



Anyway, moving on-- you see the hesitation there. So, the final thing that I want to say is lying is okay. You can lie on this exam. The police will not come to your door the next day and say hey, you talked about your granddad, but you never had one. That's not going to happen, but be aware like lying always-- this always happens when you're lying. You're digging a hole.

So, if the examiner wants to pursue this topic that you just lied about, you're going to have to invent more lying and for me, this is-- you are digging a hole and you've got to keep track of your lies and it becomes very exhausting.

You might as well just tell the truth even if it's boring, but maybe just go into some detail there to expand on the topic, but if you start off lying and the examiner starts asking you about that lie all of a sudden it becomes a massive lie and it's harder to invent the material and then translate it and then say it. It's much easier if you can just translate it and then say it. There are less stages involved so obviously, there's less mental energy in there.

<b>VERY USEFUL TECHNIQUE</b>
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Also, what you can do and **this is a very useful technique is you can say, for example, imagine we've got the question about laws and rules in society for [part 3](#). You can say well, to be**



honest because I'm rather new in this country and it's very different from my own, this question about rules and lawlessness I'm not so sure I know that much about it, but I can talk about the rules and laws in my secondary school if that's okay. I'd like to tell you about it because it is similarly related and the teachers were very strict... and then just go into it.

You don't have to even ask for permission. You just say well, I don't know that much about rules and laws in society, but I can tell you about the rules in my school. They were pretty strict. Remember this is a language exam. The examiners are testing your ability to communicate, not your ability to talk about-- I don't know, your favorite childhood toy or your favorite meal that you like to cook.

This is all just an excuse to hear your ability and as I've said a million times before, it's an excuse-- they're giving you the opportunity to shine. They want you to pass. They want you to score. They want you to carry on striving and improving yourself and going for it. They honestly do want this and it's your opportunity and your responsibility to give it to them.

**For the pronunciation part, we're going to put it into another podcast. We're going to put it into part 2 and that will be available very, very soon.**

Now, what I'd like to do is just thank you for listening. If you've enjoyed this tutorial, then please come over to [ieltpodcast.com](http://ieltpodcast.com) and [sign up](#), get on the mailing list and we can send you updates, special offers, more information about passing. If you're struggling with the exam, you



can just email, tell us what you're struggling with and we'd love to help you. We can send you some resources.

Also, if what we talked about before with regards to the [Speaking Confidence course](#), then have a look. That course is currently included into the writing course. **The [writing course is the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free](#), but that course is also-- gets students who are already at band 7. It usually gets them fantastic results and they can get to band 8. We've had a couple get to band 9.**

So, what I'm saying is that if that course was interesting, then go over to [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com) and find out-- you can find out more details. Don't hesitate to ask us if you've got any questions related to this. It doesn't include the framework yet. We're still perfecting it, but it will be coming soon. That's everything from me.

Just one last thing: if you know any students, if you know anybody else who is struggling with the IELTS exam, [please get them to listen to us and we can help them too](#). So, share it with your friends and remember you're doing this because you want to be better and it's a matter of time until you get the results. **You only fail if you give up. So, just keep on going.**

I'm an immigrant. You're an immigrant and maybe you're not an immigrant now, but you probably will be an immigrant and this is what we do. This is what we do. We make our lives harder because we want to be better and I don't see anything wrong with that. I think it's



defining. It's probably the best word. Okay, that's everything. Have a super day and keep on improving.

**Female Voice:** Thanks for listening to [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com)

