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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: IELTS speaking: a brief overview of part 1 with tips to help you improve your performance. So, in this tutorial you can find out what to expect for part 1 of the [IELTS speaking](#) and also as I said we're going to look at some tips to improve your performance. Let's jump straight into it.

So, as you probably know the IELTS academic and IELTS general training always involves a face to face interview with a certified examiner and this is the same whether you're taking the computer-based test or the paper-based test. So, **the whole test lasts around 11, 14 minutes**



and you know there are three sections: [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#) and it's gradually becoming more challenging.

FOUR COMPONENTS OF YOUR SPEAKING SCORE

The examiner is going to be listening and grading you on four components: **fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation**. Let's have a look at those in reverse order. **Pronunciation**: the ability to be understood easily. **Grammatical range and accuracy**: your ability to use a wide range of grammatical structures accurately. Accurately is the key phrase there.

Lexical resource: your ability to use a range of vocabulary appropriately. Are you repeating the same phrases or can you say the same thing using a variety of phrases? And the final one **fluency and coherence**: that's your ability to speak at a good speed and link your ideas



together. We're going to look at that in in some future tutorials coming up and I think I've mentioned it before when I was talking about that framework for part 3 and for part 2.

PART 1

Anyway today, right now, we are focusing on the [first part](#). So, the first part lasts between 4-5 minutes. It's probably the **easiest part**. The goal is to get you at ease. You're going to be talking about familiar topics such as your hometown, your work , your studies, your family, your hobbies, your interests and this should be relatively familiar for you. We're not sort of like exploring new topics and topics that you might never have spoken about before.

So, the examiner is going to start off by saying now-- by saying something similar to this: Now, in this first part, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself. Right. Just a word of warning here: it's important to be aware that the examiner is required to follow a script to ensure



consistency. So, don't be put off by this. If they sound a little bit dejected, unenthusiastic, it's probably because it's the 20th time they said those phrases, okay?

TEFLON MENTALITY

So, it's really important to sort of like go in there with this Teflon mentality. **Teflon mentality is just something that I invented, but these pans, these modern-day pans they're coated with Teflon, which means nothing sticks to them. You can burn bacon in there all day and it usually doesn't stick, all right? You need to have the same mentality.** They can be sort of-- they can-- I don't know. Maybe the examiner looks burnt-out, washed-up, alcoholic, but you need to still go in there with your back straight, your head up, shining and be happy and really go in there with the mentality of this is my opportunity to shine, okay?



So, that's what I mean. You don't want-- even if they do look really tired and burnt out or if they don't look friendly, it doesn't matter. You go in there. Don't let that attitude stick to you. You go in there and you show what you can do. So, it's like this Teflon mentality.

Now then, typical questions that you're likely to hear could be let's talk about your hometown or city. What do you like most about your hometown or city? Is your hometown or city a popular place for tourists to visit? Would you say it's a good place to live? Now, these should be quite straightforward for you.

If you've done the test before then the examiner might have asked you these questions, you answered and then they proceeded by saying why. For example, is your hometown-- is your hometown or city a popular place for tourists to visit? You say no, not really. It's quite quiet and then you say-- and then the examiner might say why not? Why isn't it a popular place?

If you are getting these types of follow-on questions with why? Why not? why? Why not? Then that's a small indication that you should really be extending your answers because the answers you're giving are not sufficient, okay? We need to think of this as a conversation and as I've said



before, you don't want to make it hard work for the examiner. You want to make it easy. So, give quite lengthy answers.

Now, how do we talk? How do we expand these answers? How do we avoid the examiner working? How do we make their job easier? Well, we do some research. We research our hometown. We research our city and if our city is a pile of rubbish like Liverpool, no, I'm just joking. If our city is not the most interesting place, I'm just joking about Liverpool. It's a fascinating place. It's got a massive rich history. You've got Liverpool Football Club. You've got the docks. You've got the Beatles. You've got all of this iconic imagery and heritage, but if it's more--

If your city is a boring place or your hometown is a bit boring and nothing comes to mind then it's really your responsibility to do some research and even if it's not a boring place you can still do the research, find out some nuggets of information like my city, it's not the most active of places, but it was where-- I don't know. It was the birthplace of the socialist movement, for



example. That's true for Manchester by the way, but what I'm saying is that you can look for interesting tidbits of information.

Likewise-- for example, imagine we get part 1 questions like this. Let's talk about your job. What exactly do you do? Do you like your job? Why did you decide to do that job? What responsibilities do you-- what responsibilities do you have at work? Hopefully, this is a walk in the park for you.

What I mean is hopefully this is easy and straightforward and it's actually an opportunity, just like I mentioned before, it's an opportunity for you to prepare for this topic, learn some unique collocations, some unique [topic-specific vocabulary](#) and it's your opportunity to express these, to tell the examiner about these.

Also, if it's your job it's probably your field of expertise. So, you'd be more confident about talking about this exact topic, but still that's not a license to-- or that's not permission just to not research this. I would still strongly recommend writing out a-- basically, you could even just write out a small informal essay about your hometown, about your country, about your job,



about your studies, about your interests, and then review it and look for opportunities where you could maybe throw in some-- where you could upgrade the vocabulary.

For example, if I said my hometown is called Huddersfield. There's lots of things to do there. I think it's a very good city. Now, if I wanted to improve that I would go back and I would identify vanilla words. I would identify the basic words like good, bad, and things.

So, instead of things, I could say there's lots of activities to do in the countryside and then I'll probably even think of a few examples like for example, you've got the Yorkshire Dales just about 30 minutes away. So, it's really easy to get into nature and start hiking or if you're interested in outdoor pursuits, there's lots of like youth centers and outdoor pursuit businesses located in the Yorkshire Dales that you can find and utilize and just to have a more enjoyable weekend.

Also, I said there are lots of good things to do. So, instead of good you could say interesting because they-- you could find it better adjectives and this is what I mean about upgrading your language. So, that's another part 1. We can talk about your job. You can talk about your



hometown. As I said-- just as we said before a few minutes ago, if you are finding that the examiner is asking you why after these that's an indiscreet or a small signal to you that really you should be extending your answers and giving slightly longer answers. Now, we're going to listen to another one.

SAMPLE ANSWER 1

Sample Answer: *I live in a small town on the Pacific Coast of Mexico and one of the best things about living here is the beach. Between about May and November, there are great waves and it's fun to go surfing. Then from November to May the water is calm and the visibility is superb. So, you can swim or go snorkeling.*

Ben: Now, how long should your answer be? Well of course, there's no perfect length. However, we must remember one of the [key criteria for band 7](#) is the ability to speak at length



without noticeable effort. So, this is why getting your preparation in beforehand, before the exam is key because if you're preparing well, you're doing some research, you're looking for the perfect vocabulary terms and more unique terms then it's going to be much easier to speak at length.

Also, that information, those structures, that vocabulary, is all going to be relatively fresh in your mind which means your brain doesn't have to spend time searching for it in your vocabulary reserve. It doesn't have to go and find it, try and remember how to pronounce it and then say it. It's fresh. You used it about two days ago, for example. So, this is why it's important to do the research. Let's listen to a sample answer now.

SAMPLE ANSWER 2



Sample Answer: *I live in a small town on the Pacific Coast of Mexico and one of the best things about living here is the beach. Between about May and November, there are great waves and it's fun to go surfing. Then from November to May, the water is calm and the visibility is superb, so you can swim or go snorkeling.*

Ben: Now, that was a pretty good answer I honestly thought. It just goes back to this philosophy of not making the examiner work. Make their job easy. We've got some details there about the months, about the person's personal activity: it's fun to go surfing. We've also got the water is calm and the visibility is superb and you can do some-- you can swim or go snorkeling. So, that goes back to what I said before and the original answer I gave you. You could say there are lots of things to do or you can say in May the water is calm and the visibility is superb, so you can go swimming or snorkeling. How much better is that?

Now, let's listen to a sample part 1 answer if we get asked about describe your job.



SAMPLE ANSWER 3

Sample Answer: *I love my job. It is very tiring and it can be demanding at times, but I wouldn't want to do anything else. I've been a teacher for about five years now and I really enjoy helping people to achieve their goals. It's so rewarding to watch my students learning and progressing and I get a real sense of satisfaction when they pass their exams.*

Ben: So, this is another good answer because we've got some useful or some higher level verbs, adjectives, and collocations. We've got it can be demanding at times. That's good. That's very good. Where is it? I really enjoy helping people to achieve their goals. That's infinitely better than I enjoy this job. It's good. We've got achieve there and also we've got rewarding,



progressing, a real sense of satisfaction. So, this is the kind of upgrading that we want to achieve.

Now, depending on how much you've said, if you've just given short answers then the first part might have to be extended by the examiner. So, these topics they might include talking about food, they might include talking about free time activities, shopping, family, television, weather or sports, but generally speaking, they're not going to be complicated.

Don't worry if you are going into that area, but you could actually take that as a message is like okay, I should really start extending my answers a little bit especially in [part 3](#). If the examiner does decide to [extend part 1](#) you might hear something like let's go on to talk about food. What's the typical food in your country? Do you like it? Why? Why not? Those extenders, those points to extend. What's your favorite food? Is there any food you really dislike? What do you think about fast food? Let's listen to a sample answer. By the way, if you can place this guy's accent, good for you and if you need to find out, have a look at this specific tutorial post on ieltspodcast.com. So, let's have a listen to this guy, to a sample answer.



SAMPLE ANSWER 4

Sample answer: *Actually, yes. I grew up in the UK and English people have a reputation for overcooking their vegetables. When I was a child, I used to have to eat soggy sprouts several times a week and this experience has scarred me for life. I have a pretty healthy diet these days. I eat a wide variety of vegetables, but I steer clear of sprouts.*

Ben: Now, why do I like this answer? Well, there's a few sort of like higher-level adjectives; overcooking, for example. Also, we've got a mini story which has enabled the speaker to talk-- to use the past. When I was a child, I used to have to eat soggy sprouts. So, that's another sort of like example of quite unique higher level vocabulary and there's also a sprinkling of humor.

Generally speaking, I would avoid writing a funny or avoid saying anything funny unless you're pretty confident and it's quite light-hearted. You don't want to be going in there and saying



knock-knock, doing the knock-knock jokes, but if you're confident it's quite a light-hearted joke then why no, but I'll definitely test it. This one: scared me for life is reasonably-- I think it's on the borderline, but you must be confident. This reminds me of my English classes where I used to tell a joke and everybody just sat there staring at me.

Anyway, let's get back to this part 1. I have a pretty healthy diet these days and I eat a wide variety of vegetables. A wide variety. It's not-- the student here didn't say I eat a lot of vegetables. I eat a wide variety. It just makes it that little bit silkier, a little bit smoother and also I steer clear of sprouts. Another good way to say I don't eat sprouts. I steer clear of sprouts. So, this is why it's a good example of a part 1.

FINAL TIP



Now then, one final thing. **If you can practice your speaking obviously, this is going to help and do not feel restrained if you do not have a speaking partner. Don't feel restrained if you don't have an online tutor or a real-life tutor. The key here is-- what I would do is just still continue speaking.**

Find some model answers like we've got in this tutorial. Find the scripts and then just copy them and speak about these and then if you want to get your speaking corrected, you can send that in to us and we'll give you some feedback on that as well. This is a new service that we'll be launching very soon.

If you want to [boost your vocabulary](#) then have a look at our special page we've got about that. There are lots of collocations there, [topic-specific vocabulary](#). It's quite an extensive guide.

[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com.

Male Voice: But I steer clear of sprouts.



Ben: Super. Is that true for you? Did you have a lot of soggy sprouts when you were a kid?

Male Voice: No, Christmas. That's it.

Ben: Just at Christmas?

Male Voice: Yes, only at Christmas.

Ben: Yes, we did too and it's only my dad who ate them. Everybody else just avoided it like the plague.

Male Voice: Yes.

Ben: Pretty [unintelligible 00:21:37.03].

Male Voice: Some of these things are like a tradition, but no one-- no one wants to get rid of it, but no one wants to actually do it too.

Ben: Nobody enjoys it, exactly.



Male Voice: [unintelligible 00:21:48.08] it's keeping some farmers in business anyway.

Ben: Exactly, exactly. All right. So, this is probably going to be published in a couple of weeks.

Would you like to be a global star?

Male Voice: Sure.

Ben: Rival K-pop and all that?

Male Voice: I don't mind.

Ben: Okay.

Male Voice: If you want to put my name on that, feel free.