



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

Tina: Hi, everyone. **My name is Tina and I'm from Vietnam and I have recently taken the IELTS general training module for the Canadian immigration program.**

Ben: Awesome. All right. Do you have a target date for when you want to be in **Canada** for?

Tina: To be honest, I didn't really have a target date, but when I decided to apply for the program I tried to get the IELTS result as soon as I could.

COMPUTER-BASED OR PAPER-BASED

Ben: Right. Okay and just out of curiosity, did you take the [computer-based](#) one or the pen and paper?



Tina: To be honest, I think the first time I took the pen and paper and then the last three on the computer ones.

Ben: Right, so it's been four in total until you got the grades you wanted.

Tina: Yes. That's right.

Ben: Got you. And did you find the computer one a little bit easier?

Tina: For me, I think **computer one is easier than the paper-based.**

Ben: Yes, this is what I'm hearing. I think if I took the test, I would definitely do the computer one because well, there are just so many advantages especially when you are coming to the writing; the copy, the paste, and you got the--

Tina: And **also the reading as well. So, you can just copy the words from the text and paste in the answer.**

TINA'S CHALLENGES



Ben: That's fantastic. That's a good tip. All right. Let's see. What challenges did you have with these tests, with these IELTS tests?

Tina: To be honest, I have studied English for a while and then I'm using this almost every day, but my biggest problem was in the writing. So, I was stuck at 6.5 for three of them.

Ben: Right. I see. So, you're using English every day for work?

Tina: Work, yes.

Ben: Got you. And I guess you are not writing academically for work, are you?

Tina: No, definitely not.

Ben: What kind of English are you using for work communication? I guess this is like standard neutral. I guess.

Tina: Yes, communication, conversation, a little bit of presentation and emailing.

Ben: Right, so nothing like what they're asking for in the IELTS exam.

Tina: No, definitely not.

Ben: Right and then how were you preparing for the exam beforehand?



Tina: In the beginning, I would just buy those Cambridge practice tests set and then just go on with that for all the other three skills because I have never taken IELTS before. So, just to get an idea about a structure and then for writing mainly I just choose some reading online on tips and things events try to write a few paragraphs.

Ben: I see and with the other areas, what were your specific scores for reading, speaking, and listening?

Tina: I think for **reading and listening I got both 9.**

Ben: Wow! Very good. Excellent. And for the speaking?

Tina: I think speaking I only got like 7.5 because I don't even know the structure and I didn't really practice on that at all.

Ben: Okay. Wow! That's surprising. I would have thought it would have been a little bit higher. So, what was the-- are you still there?

Tina: Yes, I'm here.

Ben: Okay, sorry because I closed the window and when I closed the window and then it was quiet. Sorry about that. So, with the [reading](#) and [listening](#), your preparation was mainly using the practice tests from the books.



Tina: Yes, that was it.

Ben: Right and so, I guess if you had a couple of books you probably did about-- I don't know, 20-odd tests. Would that seem right?

Tina: Yes, I think around that. I think I got like 10, 11, 12, 13 before four tests I did all of them before it reached 16 in total.

Ben: 16! Wow! Wow! And after each test, did you review and analyze where you were losing the points or did you just keep pushing--

Tina: Yes.

Ben: Okay and then you worked on that specific area.

Tina: Right. So, I just want to figure out what is the trick here or just to get used to that flow and also the timing as well because IELTS and other kinds of tests are about how well you do the test. It's not much even about your knowledge or your English capability as well.

Ben: Yes, yes. I always say to students **there are two skills-- you're getting tested on two skills: your ability to do the test and your language skills.** This is why like I've said a million times, students can be-- like even native English speakers can fail the test because they don't know how to write in an academic fashion which is similar to what was happening with you. So, for



your writing, you said that you were just researching around online and finding some tips and then applying it to your essays. Is that right?

JOINING THE IELTS ONLINE COURSE

Tina: Yes, so that was it and then I also register for one online course as well like for a few hours tutoring.

Ben: Right. Okay and what-- was the course helpful for you?

Tina: At first I thought it was, but to be honest, it wasn't that much helpful. So, that's why I failed the test. I took it from the very first test. I failed it three times. So, I'm saying it's not that much helpful.

Ben: It's not been that good. Okay and then what sort of like changed in your mind when you thought hey, I need to sort of like change my strategy here, I need to find something else? What was the trigger?

Tina: Well, after-- at first, I was like okay, maybe I'm not well prepared so I'm trying again to do it the second time and then after a second time something is kind of wrong, but I think I can try



again and getting better with it. So, I tried a third time and then okay it's really wrong. I need to get a structure because I cannot really find materials online that getting people from 6.5 to 7. Most of them are reaching to 6.5 and that's it.

Ben: Yes, yes. To get from-- to jump from 6.5 to 7, you need to put in some work. A lot of students-- and it's not a case of just knowing like how to write an IELTS essay. It sort of like it's a case of doing-- knowing how to write it, but write it with the correct grammar and without the spelling. It really is kind of like a fusion of both the exam skills and the language skills and a lot of students do not know how to-- a lot of students don't know how to write the essay and they don't know where the errors are that they are committing. So, you were getting-- you ended up joining our course, correct?

Tina: Yes, that's correct and I am happy I did.

Ben: Okay. Super.

Tina: That's why I'm coming back [unintelligible 00:08:13.04].

Ben: Do you remember-- well, **what was the biggest benefit from joining the course?**

Tina: For me, the biggest problem for me is the ideas; how to structure your ideas that you need what IELTS expecting and yes. So, normally before I used to start like okay, I only have one idea. How can I write it and in a specific format that I'm being asked to?



Ben: I see. I see. **And then after watching the tutorials and getting some feedback you learned how to generate ideas and organize your thoughts would you say?**

Tina: Yes, definitely. It is like-- it worked out amazing. I have only one idea, but I was able to write two paragraphs with it. It helps you to develop the ideas.

Ben: Do you remember your exact question?

Tina: Until now I don't remember exactly, but I think it was about-- one question was about I think that current trend is about people are buying more things that they don't need and why is that and how is that affecting your personal life and social?

Ben: Interesting. Wow!

Tina: Things like that.

Ben: That's very interesting. So, you just used the structure and the strategy from the online course. You applied that and after applying it was it quite straightforward for you?

Tina: It was really helpful because I-- with that type of question I was a bit stuck. What should I write? When I came to the test something wrong and I'm just applying this structure and I just sit down and I just followed that and I finished it and when I came back home I feel like I'm kind of confident with the result, so the results should be all right.



Ben: Super. And you completed all the essays, right, that we asked you to write?

Tina: Yes and then I didn't have time to go over it again as well.

Ben: Okay. So, you sort of like worked through the course, sending in your essays, getting feedback and then you went back and reviewed the course again?

Tina: Definitely. Yes.

Ben: Super. Super. Which was your favorite part of the course, if you don't mind me asking? Would you say it was the idea generation or feedback or?

Tina: I would say both. **The idea generation is one and then before I learn the course I was like okay, I don't have ideas to write and I don't know what to write and then at the end of the course, I end up-- well, close to the end, I end up writing essays that are longer than even expected and I feel like I may not have time in the exam and then I have to ask for feedback on is there any way I can cut it down. So, and then I have to practice on cutting down the ideas, work it out in the correct way.**

Ben: So, we kind of opened up a Pandora's Box. It was just like once it's switched on it was almost impossible to switch off.

Tina: Right.



Ben: Super and just a few more questions. Would you say your [writing skills](#) have-- your general writing skills have kind of like improved and carried over into your sort of like every day English like work environment? Would you say that?

Tina: Well, I do think it is actually helping my normal daily writing as well. I was writing kind of casual and so this helped me to structure my writing better.

Ben: Super. Yes, I must admit when I was learning this, which is like a long time ago, but I found an improvement in not only the quality of my writing but also in the quality of my spoken communication and sort of like in my thinking processes. It got clearer and sharper as well. I was writing a lot at that time and also just trying to get to grips with all the tutorials that I was learning and writing in a succinct manner, writing sharper, writing more concise. All right, back to IELTS. What tips would you give to any of the students struggling in each of the disciplines? So, I guess for reading and listening it would be practice tests, yes?

TIPS FROM TINA

Tina: Yes. **For reading and listening, I think it's mainly practice and there are tips on those that you go from top to bottom. That how it's normally structured and go with the**



computer-based because for reading you can copy and paste. You don't have to worry about spelling mistake and it saves you time as well.

Ben: Excellent tips there. And for the-- well, just like IELTS aside, you said you are using your English for your work every day and are you listening to a lot of English when you finish work as well?

Tina: Yes. I do watch movies, American movies and those kinds of things. So, yes. So, I do.

Ben: Wow! Okay. So, you have pretty much completely immersed into an English speaking environment even though you live in Vietnam, right?

Tina: Yes.

Ben: Okay. Cool. All right then, so we've covered reading and speaking. What about-- Sorry, reading and listening. What about the speaking?

Tina: Well, for me speaking-- because I don't know if I can give any tips to people who are actually learning English, but for me, I'm using it almost every day. The only thing I feel like is trying to be natural. You don't need to think of like stories, that's too fancy story to tell the examiner. Just natural even sometimes we asking you something you don't even know you just say well, honestly I don't know and then you explain some related things around it.



Ben: Yes, yes. Exactly. Good point there. Good point. I think a lot of students get really worked up. What if they ask me something I don't know or I can't speak and I think-- yes, it just comes to being natural and even if possible, a little bit charming I think would definitely-- it wouldn't work against you and it definitely helps. **Be natural and confident.** So, do you have anything else that you would like to add? Any tips for students?

Tina: Well, my last tip is also favoring to your courses. It is really helpful to take the course and you have to make sure that you do the homework.

Ben: Exactly.

Tina: That definitely helps.

Ben: Thank you. Thank you. Yes. This is so true. You can't take the course and then just watch all the videos and turn in to the exam. It's highly unlikely you're going to see that much of a change. So, yes. It's a case of putting in the work, [getting the feedback, and improving your essays.](#)

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