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## INTRODUCTION

**Ben: IELTS Speaking: using complex sentences in your speaking exam. In this tutorial, we will find out what is meant when we say a complex sentence. We're going to look at the importance of incorporating these complex sentences into the IELTS speaking test and we will also look at the importance of focusing on natural use of the language. This is really important.**

Now, as you probably know, the speaking test is the same for both that [IELTS academic](#) and the [IELTS general training](#) and it's quite unique in the fact that it involves a face-to-face interview with a certified examiner and this is the same if you're doing the [computer-based](#) or if you're doing the paper-based.



Just as a side note, if you find that you get nervous in this exam, then it's entirely your responsibility to solve this. You cannot blame it on the examiner. This might sound harsh, but it's not the examiners fault that you are getting nervous. Fair enough; the examiner might be intimidating for you, but in all seriousness, if you are getting nervous in front of the examiner, then it's your responsibility to [solve this problem](#).

I think there are a few options. You can get familiar with the exam and probably do practice mock exams, speaking exams and with a personal tutor, possibly online, with a friend; your deal. You can have a look at the format of the exam and in this instance, one thing is knowing the format, but the other thing is actually working through the format. So, just be careful about that last tip I gave. It's like you can't learn to ride a bike by reading about it. You have to get on it and this is a similar situation.

**Third way you could overcome your nervousness is to look at some [breathing techniques](#) such as diaphragmatic breathing where there's a series of deep breaths.** You can look online and research that. Then there's a whole host of different ways to boost your speaking confidence. YouTube is a good resource as well, but as always, do not just sit there like a



cabbage, like a vegetable absorbing all this information because it's useless without action. You have to actually apply it.

I suffer from this as well. I think we all do and it's a good way to avoid doing the actual work if we're just there in passive mode absorbing information like a vegetable. So, my tip for this is just pick one of the techniques that you find from your research and implement it and then once you've got that mastered, you move on to the next technique.

You can add them together and you compound them, but learning about 20 different tips to boost your confidence possibly won't work. It's better just to have like one or two that you've mastered and then master another two and then slowly go about improving in that way. Okay, let's get back to the topic.

So, the speaking test lasts between 11 and 14 minutes and as you probably know, is divided into three sections which gradually become more challenging. **The examiner is going to be looking at basically four areas: [fluency and coherence](#), [lexical resource](#), [grammatical range and accuracy](#), and [pronunciation](#).** I'm not going to go into detail there. I'm not going to go into



detail of those three. I'm going to mainly just focus on grammatical range and accuracy specifically the use of complex sentences.

Let's have a look at the band descriptors for bands 5, 6, and 7 and then we can have a look at examples. Now, a band-5 candidate will use a limited range of structures and attempt to use complex sentences, okay, attempt. So, they're at least trying. A band-6 candidate uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms, okay? So, a band-6 candidate uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms whereas a band-7 student uses a variety of complex sentences.

So therefore, it's clearly important we need to be incorporating [complex sentences](#) to get a high score. Now, what exactly is a complex sentence? Actually, it's just a combination of two or more simple sentences. Let's have a look at some examples. Perhaps the easiest way to describe a complex sentence is to use [conjunctions](#).



## CONJUNCTIONS

**Conjunctions** will join the sentences together. Conjunctions can be simple words such as **and, but, or** and then slightly more tricky ones, slightly, something like **because, so that, before, when, although**. So, these are quite straightforward and I imagine you've probably got a grasp of these already. I'll give you a very basic example.

So, you could say I live with a friend. I met her at university or we could just boost it up. We could spice it up a little bit and we could say I live with a friend who I met at university. Can you see? It's much, much better. Another example: On my last holiday, I went to Brighton. It's a town by the sea. Slightly upgraded version would be: On my last holiday, I went to Brighton, which is a town by the sea. You see?

So, using the relative clause in that last one, we've managed to upgrade our speaker and I personally believe that you can get into the habit of doing this through practice and that's what it needs to be. It needs to be an automated habit. It needs to be automatic for you to do this



because as we've said before, speaking is spontaneous and we can't go back and take back those words. So, it's much better if it just comes out first time the correct way.

Now then, the band 7 band descriptor says-- if you remember, it says using a variety of complex sentences. So here, instead of saying I don't have much free time. I don't do much exercise; we could say I don't have much free time, so I don't do much exercise. But if we wanted to really upgrade it, we could say if I had more free time, I would do more exercise. Can you see there? Conditionals are very good for getting that variety of complex sentence sort of like criteria.

### COMMON TOPIC IN SPEAKING PART 1: **FOOD**

Now then, a common topic in part 1 of the speaking is [food](#). So, a typical question could be what's your favorite food? Here, we can listen to one simple answer. My favorite food is lasagna. My mom is a great cook and when I was growing up she used to make lasagna every Saturday. It's not exactly healthy as she uses plenty of cheese, but it's absolutely delicious.



Now in that example, what I did was I've joined lots of simple sentences together to form a complex one, okay? Here's another one. Well, just to go back there, so we have when and we also got so when I was growing up. It's connected that way and then in the second sentence it's not exactly healthy as she uses plenty of cheese, but it's absolutely delicious. You see? Let's move on.

I think my favorite food is chocolate. I would probably eat chocolate every day if I could. I can't remember a time when I didn't eat chocolate, so I think I've probably been a chocoholic since childhood. So, just working backwards there, we've got since, we've got so, we've got when, we've got-- that's probably about it and also hopefully, you'll have realized there's a mixture there of sort of like a short sentence, a medium sentence and then a longish sentence. Similar to the writing; variety here because variety is what's natural and it sounds-- it's the easiest for the ear.

If it's just short sentences in the writing and in the speaking, it sounds quite staccato whereas if it's long sentences, it's a strain. It's a strain for the listener. It's a strain for the reader because they have to hold lots of information in their mind. Also, it's just not pleasant, to be honest. Oh



no, that's not what I was going to say. Also, it increases the chances of a grammatical mistake the longer the sentence is. Just proved my point there. Anyway, let's move on.

One last example: steak. So, what's your favorite food? Steak, I think. I know that it's not very environmentally friendly and I know that we are all supposed to be becoming vegans, but in my opinion, nothing beats the taste of a medium-rare steak. So, that was a good sentence actually. I like that. We've got some topic-specific vocabulary: vegans, medium rare. We're talking about the environment and we've managed to link it together and we've put in a conjunction there as well and we've got a good collocation: nothing beats the taste of... or nothing beats waking up on a Sunday morning, nothing beats home cooking.

Now then, let's just move on. So, although it's important to incorporate these complex sentences into your speaking, as I was just saying before, we need to achieve a balance. This balance is kind of related to the variety and it just makes it sound natural and as I've said, this is true-- thank you very much. This is true for both the speaking and the writing, all right?



Also, just one last thing. It's also worth remembering the three other areas. We've got fluency and coherence, we've got-- what were the other three now? Just off the top of my head lexical resource, which I just mentioned with the vocabulary and then the pronunciation, but what I wanted to say is that fluency and coherence is important, okay?

Also, as we've been talking about, so is using a wide variety and using these complex-- so-called complex sentences and the key really is that we don't want to be over emphasizing or entirely focusing on the complex sentences to the detriment of fluency and coherence. You see? So, this is why it's really important to try and find this balance.

I've had students in the past just hell-bent and entirely focused on creating a grammatically perfect sentence so much so that it just didn't flow because they just kept on stopping, starting or the pauses were too long while they organized it in their mind. The pauses were too long and it just wasn't fluent.

So, this is why it's good to learn these conjunctions or learn some sentences with these conjunctions, with these structures, but learn them to a level of automaticity so that they



sound automatic. The easiest-- the most straightforward way to do this is through repetition. Repetition is the mother of all learning. I'm not going to give you any gimmicks, just get into the habit of trying to use them.

Like I was saying before, when we've got a big task in front of us, for example, I don't now-- we're going to overcome our nervousness in the speaking. For any big task, it's usually easier to just break it down into its smallest components and then focus on each of the smallest-- on one of the smallest components, master it, and move on to the next one. So in this case, maybe you're going to master since or although or the conditionals and then once you've mastered, you move on to the next one.

### **IELTS SPEAKING CONFIDENCE COURSE**

Now, just one last thing before we finish. In the [IELTS Speaking Confidence Course](#), we do offer a range of confidence-boosting techniques and there are strategies and kind of a mixture of



quick fixes and strategies to help you overcome the nervousness and also very specific strategies to buy yourself time.

So, you get the question and there's this strategy, it's pretty handy where it involves a little bit of repetition, but you give yourself those few seconds, you buy yourself a few more seconds and then you can start delivering your answer. Also, there's the framework that's coming soon and we're going to be integrating that as well.

Okay. So, that's everything from me today. If you've got any questions, send us an email. If you know anybody who's struggling with the IELTS exam, please tell them to get in contact or share them the podcast. Also, I'd have a look at the IELTS podcast Ben Worthington app: ([Android app](#) / [iOS app](#)). That's great because it comes with the transcript, it comes with them some special offers and I think it's really beneficial to be listening and reading at the same time, associating words and sounds to words, to seeing the [correct pronunciation](#) and [expanding your vocabulary](#) as well.



Now, that's everything for me today-- from me today. Wow! I'm just totally butchering my own language, aren't I? Anyway, that might be good confirmation that even native English speakers have off days. So, don't beat yourself up if you are also butchering the English language. Okay take care and keep your head up and keep working. All the best.

[Music]

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