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## INTRODUCTION

**Ben: IELTS Speaking and Writing Practice: sample answers.** We are going to be looking at **festivals**. In this tutorial, first, we will look at a **sample IELTS speaking part 2 answer for festivals** and it's going to be probably about the **Singles' Festival in China**, which I will talk about more in a second and then we've got one of those lovely IELTS task 2 questions and I'll just say the question now and you'll instantly know what I mean when I say lovely.



## SAMPLE QUESTION #2

*So, most people have forgotten the meaning behind traditional or religious festivals. During festival periods, people nowadays only want to enjoy themselves. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?*

Now hopefully, you heard my smile during the end and I was smiling because even when I saw this question, I've been doing this for years and I saw this I was like man, but fortunately, I know exactly what to do nowadays and I will share exactly the steps to take to break down my question, plan your answer, and write a [strong coherent essay](#) and there are quite a few tips in there as well near the end.

But before that, we are going to answer this beautiful IELTS speaking part 2 question. Describe a festival in your country. You should include the reason or origin of the festival, when it is celebrated, and what people usually do during the festival.



Now, I wrote out my answer beforehand and I think this is a fantastic way to prepare because I recognized that I was repeating the word origin numerous times in my answer and because I wrote it out, I recognized this and I went back and I changed it. I changed it and found what was similar and this is a very good way to improve your score.

So, I strongly recommend this practice of writing out your answers, going back and improving them because not only are you going to be brainstorming ideas you're going to be [brainstorming vocabulary](#). You can also go back and upgrade the language, which is what I did as well.

So, as I said at the beginning, we're going to be talking about the Singles' Festival, which is coming up very soon in China. So, let's go into it. So, as I said, I planned this out. I wrote it and very important point here that I followed the bullet points. I've kind of used that as my structure and this will just make sure-- doing this will make sure I'm going to get full points for [task achievement](#).



If I started talking about pollution, for example, I'm not going to get any points unless I somehow connected it. So, just following these points makes sure that I stay on track and I get full points; following these bullet points. Right then, let's jump into it.

I would like to talk about the Singles' Festival they have in China. If I remember correctly, I think the festival has its origins in a university and the male students started celebrating the fact that they are single. I believe that this party or celebration quickly started to spread around the uni and then on to other places.

To be honest, I think it all happened quite quickly. It's celebrated on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November because the digits all look like singles; 11 11. I also believe that it is a quiet time of the year for commercial retailers. So, this could be one reason why it caught on so fast. It's largely a commercial event.

We have or they have plenty more festivals such as Spring Festival or Chinese New Year Festival whereby there are lots of fireworks, gifts, and communal eating. I think each region has its own



particular way of celebrating. For example, in the north, they eat dumplings whereas in other regions they give red envelopes which contain money.

Sorry, I'm getting off track; back to Singles' Festival. People will largely just buy products, services, and even holidays, I think and this is all largely conducted through the internet. In fact, if I remember correctly, I think it's the biggest online shopping event in the world. Lots of online retailers such as Alibaba and JD.com launch massive campaigns and offer huge discounts to lure and attract single shoppers. I think they also target couples nowadays, but I cannot be 100% certain about that and that's my talk about a festival in China. I hope you liked it.

There we go. Okay. So, there was a bit of a mix-up there. It's describe a festival in your country and I did write it out originally as though it was in my country China, which obviously isn't. My country is England, the UK, so you probably might have heard a few mistakes there. I wanted to talk about the Chinese festival, so I did kind of modify the answer there. So, that would have



actually been a mistake. I would have been marked down. I should have been talking about a festival in my country. My country is not China, but anyway I wanted to talk about China.

#### SAMPLE ANSWER #1

Let's jump into this answer because there are a few things that I think would be very useful and very practical for somebody who is practicing for the [IELTS speaking](#) or who is struggling with the IELTS speaking. Firstly, there are quite a few phrases there that you can use in any IELTS speaking answer. I've highlighted them in my answer and I'll go through them now.

Number one: If I remember correctly... just a little collocation there. I can say that about anything. If I remember correctly, the world is round. If I remember correctly, President Trump is American. Obviously, you've got to use it within reason. The other phrase is I believe that... and it's just a variation of I think that.



Next phrase: To be honest... This is a very common phrase in England. To be honest, I don't know what time the bus is coming. To be honest, I don't really know him that well. To be honest, I prefer vegetarian food. It's very versatile.

So, using that little collocation like this will help you to sound more like a native speaker because when you start this, to be honest, the listener is already expecting the end, which is honest-- to be honest and it's very easy to use this as well. Another phrase, for example-- you should be using this anyway because it's going to force you to give an example, which like in the writing, it proves your point; makes your argument irrefutable.

Now, a very useful phrase which-- I realized I was going off track with my speaking and this phrase is very useful probably more so for the IELTS speaking, but it's fine. So, I said sorry, I'm getting off track. I'm getting off track and I just recognized the fact that I was talking about the other festivals, so I brought myself back on.



I don't think I would have lost that-- I don't think I would have lost points for that. Maybe a little bit for going off-topic, but it wasn't as if I was talking about Lamborghinis and Ferraris. I was still talking about festivals and it sounded natural, which is a key point.

Now, another phrase which actually we'd already used, I said if I remember correctly and also near the end, I used two phrases that you can use in your speaking exam tomorrow or today. I said I think they also target couples too nowadays... another phrase ...but I cannot be 100% certain about that. What you're doing there is not only are you hedging your answer, which means you're avoiding a sweeping statement but also you're adding this collocation that makes you sound more like a native English speaker.

Once again, it's a copy-paste phrase and it's very generic. It's quite universal. For example, I think Trump is American, but I cannot be 100% certain about that because I've heard reports he's an alien. I'm just joking. I've heard reports that he's a tangerine. I'm sorry. Anyway, ...but I cannot be 100% certain about that. It's quite universal.



And then the final concluding phrase that just helps you signal to the examiner that you've finished so we avoid this awkward silence at the end. You just say and that's my talk about a festival in China. I hope you liked it. In this case, of course. You're not going to say that if you've been talking about Ferraris or Trump. So, and that's my talk about Mr. Trump. And that's my talk about Apple Computer Corporation. I hope you liked it. Just random examples there.

So, let me just give you all those phrases again. If I remember correctly, I believe that... To be honest,... Sorry, I'm getting off track. If I remember correctly... and I cannot be 100% certain about that. Now, we're going to go through the talk and I'm going to give you examples of some topic-specific vocabulary and some useful phrases.

So, the first one was commercial retailers. I could have said it's a big time of the year for shops or it's a quiet time of the year for online sellers, but commercial retailers-- In fact, I should have put online commercial retailers and it's just very unique vocabulary; very unique to this topic.



The other phrase that I liked was caught on. That just means it got popular and in this case, it caught on so fast. This could be one reason why it caught on so fast. Caught on is a phrasal verb. Using phrasal verbs will help you expand your [lexical resource score](#).

Next one: I used an example. As I've said before, examples help to describe your-- they help you in your communication and help to describe your arguments or your case or your story. Each region has its own particular way of celebrating. For example, in the North, they eat dumplings. Now, the other good thing about this sentence was I said whereas and I'm using comparisons. ...whereas in other regions, they give red envelopes which contain money.

So, we give an example and then we give a contrast and using conjunctions such as whereas will force you to make a comparison and as I've said before, these conjunctions of comparison are valuable not only in your speaking, not only in your writing part 2 but in academic part 1. In academic part 1, they are extremely useful because this is the basis of the task. You've got to compare and contrast or select key points.



Anyway, sorry I'm getting off track. I hope you heard what I did there. Anyway so, sorry I'm getting off track is another useful phrase. As I've said, if you do get off track, just pull yourself back on track. This is what you have to do actually in the speaking because if this was a writing-- if I was writing an essay, I could just go back and erase or delete that sentence. With the speaking, you just cannot do that. Once it's out there, it is out forever. There's no taking it back.

So, the only way you can get back on track is just by admitting it and saying sorry, I'm getting off track. Let me get back to the Singles topic, for example. Then when I was writing this out, I said people will largely just buy things. This is all largely conducted through the internet. When I went and reviewed it, I thought things is so vanilla. It's so boring. There's no description there. People will just buy things online. That's silly. It's like a missed opportunity.

So, I changed it and I upgraded it to people will largely just buy products, services, and even holidays. So, I'm going to get points for just using that little structure of emphasizing with the even do this. This is a technique we teach in the online course, which is, for example, Germany,



Russia, and even England celebrate this festival nowadays. It just emphasizes and gives you an opportunity to put in more vocabulary and boost that lexical resource score.

And then I repeated that well-- in fact, if I remember correctly. So, the first one I used if I remember correctly and then I just elaborated it a bit more. I said, in fact, if I remember correctly, I think it's the biggest online shopping event in the world and then I gave examples: [Alibaba](#), JD.com and most people know about these especially, obviously, in China. They're very popular services, very popular websites, very popular businesses and I just gave a description of what they do.

So, I think they launch massive campaigns and then offer huge discounts and this is what I was quite pleased about next. I said to lure; L-U-R-E and attract single shoppers. Lure is very similar to attract and it's just more descriptive and it's richer. It's a richer way to explain it. It's almost just like you're setting a trap. If you're luring somebody in, you're kind of setting a trap and beckoning them to come in.



Attract is similar. Attract is just the act of sort of like waving your hand and getting their attention and then signaling, but if you're luring them, then there's almost like a surprise or something in store coming next. So, it's richer [vocabulary](#).

And then finally, as I said, we've got I think they also target couples and using the word target is a special marketing vocabulary and will also help you with your vocabulary score. Then near the end, we say again ...nowadays, but I cannot be 100% certain about that; another copy-paste collocation that you could most likely use in your speaking exam.

And that's my talk about a festival in China. I hope you liked it. I hope you liked it. There we go. You could also just pause and just say thank you. As I've said, just as before, we can do this to signal to the examiner we finished.



### SAMPLE QUESTION #2

Now, let's move on to IELTS writing part 2. I'm going to have to be very quick with this one because we are coming towards the end of the podcast. So, **most people have forgotten the meaning behind traditional or religious festivals. During festival periods, people nowadays only want to enjoy themselves. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?**

### SAMPLE ANSWER #2

Let's jump straight into it. So, how do we answer this? **Following the technique that I teach in the [online course](#)**, what we do is we split it up. This way, we can be 100% certain we're going to get full points. So, first half: most people have forgotten the meaning behind traditional



religious festivals. Second half the split: during festival periods, people nowadays only want to enjoy themselves.

I've got two sentences. These are my two body paragraphs. First thing I'm going to do is agree. Most people have forgotten the meaning behind traditional or religious festivals. I agree. I'm just going to go for the-- I agree. Personally, maybe I completely disagree, but it doesn't matter. This is a communication-- language is a communication tool and the IELTS is a language exam. We're only getting tested on our communication, not about our beliefs on traditional festivals.

So, agree, summarize. The emphasis has shifted to the more fun parts of a festival in some situations. For example, some religious or traditional festivals are very dark, so I cannot say that it's across the board. I cannot say for every festival, people have forgotten the meaning because in some places and in some festivals and in some celebrations, they do celebrate the dead, for example. They remember war victims or war casualties and all of this.



So anyway, I agree. The emphasis has shifted to the more fun parts in some festivals and sometimes people neglect the origin of the festival. So, it might be the war. It might be remembering the dead and then I think of an example. Halloween is now a commercial event especially the costumes or trick-or-treating. These are just bullet points, but I wanted to get this phrase down because trick-or-treating and costumes is good vocabulary and then especially.

So, I'm going to talk about Halloween. But in the West-- this is my phrase now. But in the West, many of forgotten that it's to remember the dead. The origin is either Celtic or a Catholic tradition. I don't know. That phrase-- those two sentences, those are just bullet points.

Now later, I'm going to change but in the West. I'm going to change however, nowadays in the West, it is common that people have forgotten that the origin of the festival is to remember the dead, for example. So, as I said, I'm just planning this out and that's my example that proves my point. By the way, Halloween comes from the Celtic I think it is, which is Hallows Eve, which I think you could probably trace back which means something about remembering the dead.



Anyway, paragraph two: During festival periods, people nowadays only want to enjoy themselves. Agree. I totally agree with this and I agree with this for this reason: because people have a hectic lifestyle, more stress, and working more hours than ever before. That's my reason. I agree with this. People want to enjoy these festivals and the reason is because of hectic lifestyles. For example, some festivals are designed for fun; Water Festival in Thailand.

So, let's see. So, it totally makes sense that people only want to enjoy themselves if the festival is designed for fun. Now, that would need some thinking about how to rephrase that for the paragraph. Furthermore, in China, they have a festival called Singles' Day, which is about enjoying products and buying things and getting discounts. So, therefore, I completely agree that some festivals and some festival periods, people only want to enjoy themselves and the reason is because the event is designed for fun alone.

So, it's a completely rational statement what the examiner wrote down and I completely agree with it. Some festivals are designed for pure fun. For example, the Water Festival in Thailand,



Singles' Day in China. So, I've got my bullet points and they need to be now dropped into a framework or dropped into an essay.

By the way, in the [course](#), we've got a perfect framework with lots of universal statements. It just makes it so much easier. Also, we give you lots more examples on how to break down the question and what to do for each different type of question and we also build your idea generation muscle, which is insanely important.

Conclusion for this essay. Now, when I wrote the conclusion, I realized that I kept on using the word origin. The origin of the festival and I thought right, let's pick up some more points and we'll use a different word and we'll talk about the roots of the festival. So, this is a very quick conclusion scribbled down. Later, I'm going to elaborate it and I'm going to use some more sophisticated academic phrases that the examiner wants to see and I'll get those phrases from the framework in the [online course](#).



## CONCLUSION

Conclusion: I think a balance is needed because ultimately, too much work and then attending dark festivals can infer a sad macabre or a sad life. Obviously, I'm going to go back and improve this vocabulary. Enjoyment should be included and even promoted. However, neglecting the roots of the festival is rather mindless and uncouth. Uncouth means-- let's see. Uncouth means uncultured, lacking in good manners or grace. So, it's kind of like uncultured.

So, I would definitely want to put that word in there because it shows the examiner I've got an [expansive vocabulary](#) and also I want to put in **macabre**. Let me just check. I think macabre-- yes. Disturbing; causing fear of death. So, I might need to just test that out a few times beforehand. However, I got my conclusion there.



So, I've planned my essay. Now, I can put it into my framework and I know that it's clear and cohesive. I know I'm going to pick up full points because of the framework. It's just going to force the essay to be clear and cohesive. I know because I've gone through the online course; I made the [online course](#). I've got a strategy to attack every type of IELTS essay question that comes.

The more I do this, the easier it gets. So, it becomes automatic so you can focus on your writing rather than stressing for ideas or getting frustrated because you've got too many ideas. With this framework, we just brainstorm and we drop them in and it's straightforward and as I said before, soon we will have a framework for the speaking. I'm quite excited about that.

If you've been listening a lot recently, you'll probably hear me drop statements in regarding the speaking framework. What we're doing now is just pulling it all together. It should be launched soon as well as the vocabulary resource that's in the pipeline and as well as the speaking app that's in the pipeline. I think I'm just running around like a headless chicken at the moment.



Right. So, that's everything from me and remember we've got the IELTS podcast app ([Google / iOS](#)) where you get all the podcasts and the transcripts with special offers for the course and for essay correction. So, I strongly recommend getting those. Also, we have the newsletter, so I'd recommend [signing up](#) for that. When you sign up, you get IELTS materials and you can email us and tell us what you're struggling with. We're more than happy to help you there.

Secondly, we've got the [online course](#) which I mentioned briefly before and the [essay correction service](#). So, I just want to say if you're struggling with this, you're not alone. Together we can get through this and we can help you.

So, all the best with your [IELTS preparation](#) and remember to keep your head up high, to keep working, keep pushing, and you will get there. You will get there. Trust me. All the best and have a fantastic day.

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