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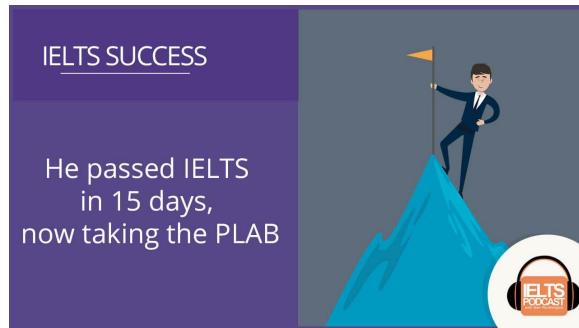
Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host, Ben Worthington.

INTRODUCTION

Sumedh: Hi, guys. My name is Sumedh and I'm from India. I just gave my IELTS exam and I gave the IELTS because I was preparing for [PLAB in UK](#), which is the exam for medical residency in UK.

Ben: Okay. Super, well done. Thank you, Sumedh and welcome to the podcast and just for the listeners, in this episode, **Sumedh is going to tell us about how he passed IELTS, how he prepared, why he's taking it, and what happened because it's something that's probably going to be of interest for the students especially for the students who failed the exam and have considered taking it again or considered getting a re-mark.**

So, Sumedh, now, so you're going to do the PLAB. Do you do that test in the UK or do you do that in India?



Sumedh: I could do it in India, but I am going to apply for a six-month visa and I will clear my PLAB 1, PLAB 2 and apply for a job there itself so...

Ben: Interesting, interesting. Which city do you want to go to in the UK?

Sumedh: I have my PLAB 1 in London and I have my Academy course at [Manchester](#)-- in Manchester.

Ben: Oh, cool. So, you'll be seeing two cities there while you're there.

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: Excellent. Have you been to Manchester before?

Sumedh: No, I haven't been to London-- UK before, so this would be my first time.

Ben: Right, okay. I'll just tell you now that the weather in Manchester is--

Sumedh: It's pretty good.

Ben: Yes, it's beautiful. There are palm trees everywhere, tropical birds flying around and yes, sometimes it gets so hot you just feel like jumping in one of the canals.

Sumedh: That's what I've been told.



Ben: Yes, just make sure you take your sun cream and three bottles. You'll definitely need it.

There is so much sun .

Sumedh: Yes, I know. I'm looking forward to it.

Ben: Yes, it sounds like you are prepared. That's good. That's good. All right. So now, let's get back to the IELTS. Can you tell the audience-- can you tell us what specific-- what's your situation with the IELTS? Had you taken the test before?

SUMEDH'S IELTS STORY

Sumedh: No. This was my first time giving IELTS and I had to travel to Mumbai. I live in a place 400 miles away from Mumbai, so I had to travel to Mumbai and it was pretty chilled out. My interview was a day before the listening, reading, and writing exam and I got an examiner from India itself and she was pretty chilled out. I cracked a few jokes, she laughed at them.

Ben: Smooth talker, Sumedh. You smooth-talked her into giving you a high IELTS score. Very smooth.



Sumedh: So, yes. I was pretty tense before the exam. I was completely-- what do you call this-- completely upside down. I was walking around in my room before the exam and I thought I could not-- I would not clear it, but the thing was the interview set me in a better mood I guess.

Ben: Okay. So, she sort of like put you at ease.

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: Excellent. That's very fortunate. That's very fortunate. Good. How did you prepare before doing this 400-mile-- was it 400-mile journey?

Sumedh: Yes. Actually, I started preparing 15 days before the exam. I was--

Ben: Oh my word!

Sumedh: I had taken your course-- I subscribed to your course for three months back like three months before the exam, but I did not get around to preparing for the exam till 15 days before the exam.

Ben: Oh, my word!

Sumedh: Yes. I was confident about my listening and reading and my speaking, but writing I was not really confident about.



Ben: Why were you confident about just reading and listening?

Sumedh: I suppose because I watched a lot of TV series and so that helped me a bit [unintelligible 00:05:42.03].

Ben: Okay. Is this something that you've been doing for a long time or you just did it a few months before the IELTS exam?

Sumedh: No, no, no. No, no. I've been watching TV series for like whole of my life now.

Ben: And always in English?

Sumedh: That's why-- yes, always in English; some in Hindi also, but yes, always in English.

Ben: Very interesting. Which ones were you watching, by the way, just out of curiosity?

Sumedh: Okay. I watched Friends, How I Met Your Mother, like your run-of-the-mill TV series, but, yes. Recently, I watched The Spy.

Ben: Okay.

Sumedh: Have you seen The Spy?



Ben: No, no, no, no, no. My sister used to watch Friends. I watched a few episodes, but I know a lot of students do like it. Okay, cool. Yes, sorry?

Sumedh: Oh, no. I love watching Scrubs. It's based on residency, so...

Ben: Yes, yes it's like all your medical profession, isn't it?

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: Very interesting. That's a good point. So, you didn't do any practice tests at all?

Sumedh: I did a few like I had solved three or four practice tests before the exam and it was pretty chilled out. We receive like four exams from IELTS itself in India. So, I solved those four and that's it.

Ben: And you got those when you signed up to take the test. Is that right?

Sumedh: Yes, yes, yes.

Ben: I thought so. Okay, that's good. That's good that they gave you those practice tests so you could get familiar with the exam. So, excellent there. So, I guess that's basically and very quickly covered your listening and reading sort of like issues. You took the practice tests, you got



familiar, but also as you said, you have basically a lifetime habit of watching TV series in English and-- without subtitles or with subtitles?

Sumedh: Without subtitles for the past four or five years.

Ben: Excellent, excellent. Yes, yes. I remember I had a student who did exactly the same and he would listen to the radio, while he was commuting, he'd be listening to the podcast and he'd been doing it for years and one day he answered the question and I was like how did you know that because we hadn't covered the grammar rule that he just said it felt right. And I was like okay, yes, that it makes sense if he's been listening all his life to native English speaker material and authentic stuff as well.

So, that's interesting and then-- so, I'm getting the impression, Sumedh, that you're quite a cool customer. You're just chilling at home on the couch watching Scrubs, maybe doing the exam, right, yes, doing the practice exams and then jumping on a train.

Sumedh: I cannot afford to be a chilled person right now because after paying for a pretty competitive fee.



Ben: Okay. Yes, but then 15 days before the exam, you go maybe I should do some work, do some work, jump on a train, walk into the exam, smooth-talk the examiner, and walk out with your grades.

Sumedh: Well, that's the dream.

Ben: Yes. Okay, let's get back to it. So, you did it 15 days before the exam. You thought hey, I should start preparing for the writing. Is that right?

Sumedh: Yes, yes.

Ben: Okay. That's when you jumped into the course.

Sumedh: Yes.

SUMEDH TOOK THE IELTS ONLINE COURSE

Ben: All right. What specific issues did you have or what specific problem were you looking to solve before you started the [course](#)?



Sumedh: The most-- I did not know what they expected from me during the exam. I could read the question-- I could answer the question, but I did not know like how do I represent what I think about the question into a written format? I could not connect two thoughts of mine together.

Ben: I see, I see and were you the type of student who has too many ideas that need to be organized or were you the type of student who is just like whoa! My mind goes blank.

Sumedh: No. I actually have too many ideas. I'm neither of the two. I actually have too many ideas and I have no clue how to organize them. So, I write them haphazardly.

Ben: Right, I see.

Sumedh: And that's where the [course](#) helped me a lot.

Ben: Like to organize your thoughts.

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: Excellent. Okay, and how were you trying to solve this problem of too many ideas in your mind before you started the course?



Sumedh: Okay. Before I started the course, I was writing all out. I used to-- if I'm writing for the topic, I used to write a whole paragraph around 100-200 words for the topic and I had no time left against the topic; the second paragraph.

Ben: I see. I see. Okay, and did you brainstorm or do like a mind map beforehand?

Sumedh: Yes, yes. That's where the course-- you told me that think about only two ideas for the course and two ideas against the course-- no, against the topic, yes and I had that model of yours which you gave. Actually, that is a lifesaver. For task 2, that is lifesaver; that is what helped me mind map my answers.

Ben: Okay. So, you brainstormed the question and then you came up with your ideas and then you dropped them into the model-- into the framework.

Sumedh: Yes, yes, yes. I think I did not copy the model as it is, but I knew that these are my ideas and those should go there and then I wrote my answer.

Ben: Excellent. Yes, yes, this is a good point because sometimes I will get an email from a student saying hey I used your model exactly like you said in the course and I didn't get my band 8 or I didn't get my band 7 or whatever and I was like okay, this model is there and it's extremely useful, but you cannot use it like a parrot.



You have to adapt it a little bit to your question and you have to put your own sort of like-- you have to put your own words and bend it a little bit for your own argument, for your specific question. So, yes. So, I'm glad that you did that. So, you worked through the course and it wasn't a case of just watching the videos and getting the model and then going to the exam. You did send us essays, didn't you?

Sumedh: Yes, yes.

Ben: Okay and who was correcting your work?

Sumedh: Nadia was correcting my work.

Ben: Nadine?

Sumedh: Okay, is that Nadine? I'm extremely sorry about that.

Ben: Don't apologize because we've never had a Nadia work for us before.

Sumedh: Oh, okay. So, check my mail once. It's Nadine. It's Nadine.

Ben: Yes. I was going to tell you unless my team are just giving the work to somebody else, but I'm pretty certain we didn't have Nadia, but there's Nadine and she doesn't do the essay corrections. A lot of students think that she does, but it's either Ellen or Daphne. It doesn't



matter. I was just curious. It doesn't matter. It's probably Ellen actually because I think you did it a few months--

Sumedh: It was Ellen I guess.

Ben: Yes, like with an American accent?

Sumedh: Yes, yes.

Ben: Yes. That was Ellen. Okay, cool and at what point did you realize that it was working for you?

Sumedh: Actually, I thought it was not working for me throughout the course and I'm sorry to say this, but I was like I am definitely going to fail this exam and towards the end of it, it was a mistake on my part because I did not listen to the essay corrections as they were supposed to be listened to. I looked at them sort of like criticism and I took self-pity on me or something. I don't know what, but I was really defensive about my answers and I thought this course is not going to help me.

It was when I submitted the third essay and I got it back and I realize that oh, I'm looking at this completely differently. They are trying to help me and then that's when-- it was three days before the exam when I got my third essay back and that's when I got to know oh, I should



change this and then I re-watched all my essay reviews. I took down all the points that Ellen had pointed out and then I worked on the mistakes. I stayed up till 3 o'clock in the morning that day.

Ben: Wow!

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: Wow! That is quite a dramatic story. So, let me just summarize. So, you were pretty defensive when you were getting your feedback and you didn't really believe in the system and you didn't believe in the feedback and there I say like a little bit cynical about the whole process.

Sumedh: Yes

Ben: Got you, got you, but then in the final essay correction or the third one actually, like the penny dropped and you kind of like jumped over to yes, you started believing in the process so to speak.

Sumedh: Yes.



Ben: Wow! Okay and then you reviewed all your other essay corrections and started taking points.

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: Wow! This is quite dramatic, isn't it?

Sumedh: Actually, I had no time because I had to leave the next morning at 7 or 7:30 in the morning and I had no time like literally no time in my hands. So, I had to stay up the whole night work, on it. I took my notebook, I downloaded the essays from [YouTube](#) and I was watching that throughout the journey. I did not write any new essays. I just like sort of sat back and analyzed the essays.

Ben: Wow! Wow! That's really-- that just shows how intelligent you are, Sumedh, because personally-- and this is what I even say to the students. I'm like okay, write them down, get into the process of doing this, and make it part of your muscle memory. Make it automatic because-- and I say this because it's quite challenging for a lot of students to sort of like see it at a theoretical level and then transform it into sort of like a practical essay that they've written. So, well done there. Well done for being able to absorb all of those points and then integrate them into your writing without like basically in the first go, correct?



Sumedh: Yes, yes.

Ben: Well done.

Sumedh: Thanks.

Ben: No problem and just going back-- just going back a bit, at what point did you realize that you needed to work on your writing?

Sumedh: I have actually never written in my whole life because I used to that is I used to [unintelligible 00:19:01.05] it and when in secondary when we were-- sorry. In secondary when we were given some assignment, I used to [unintelligible 00:19:13.15] it. I used to write it when half an hour--

Ben: Sorry?

Sumedh: --before the class started. I used to write the assignment half an hour before this class started and so I never really put in work and I knew that I had to-- I needed some help with the writing, not the grammar part but organizing my thoughts. That's where I needed help.

Ben: Got you, got you. Organizing your thoughts and then being able to communicate them in an academic fashion that the examiner wants to hear or wants to see.



Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: Excellent, excellent. Now then, can you tell us what happened with your result-- well you're speaking it seemed to have gone pretty smoothly, no?

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: What did the examiner do for you that helped you sort of like relax?

Sumedh: I don't know. I just entered the room-- at the examination room and she was standing there. I asked her may I please sit and she was like yes, you can and she gave me a smile and that was when all the worry-- I relax a bit.

Ben: Wonderful. It's interesting how just a small gesture like that can make such a difference.

Sumedh: Yes.

Ben: That's interesting and for the reading and the listening, I guess it was just a case of going in there, sitting down, and doing the work, no?

Sumedh: Yes, but I would like to remind each and every student of yours that there are no toilet breaks between the listening exam. So, I went into the exam 40 minutes before the listening test and I really had to--



Ben: Go. Yes, okay you just did.

Sumedh: Yes, I already did. So, I really had to go and I entered the exam 40 minutes before the scheduled test and it was-- the AC was really crammed up. I mean it was 18 degrees or so and I asked the examiner-- the invigilator that may I use the toilet and she was like no. What do you mean no? She's like no one is allowed to leave the examination hall before the listening test is over and I was like no, I'm not getting the exam. I have to leave now, but somehow it was okay. That's the thing. I could not listen to the last paragraph. I mean I could not. I really tried.

Ben: Of course.

Sumedh: Yes. I really tried to strain. I really tried to concentrate throughout the last passage, but I missed last two or three lines because I was really excited that finally this is over and that's when I lost my single question. I mean if you will get 39 out of 40, that's when you get a score of 8.5, right, in listening.

Ben: Yes

Sumedh: Yes, that's where I lost the point. I would have gotten 9 if it was not for that.

Ben: Oh, got you. So, what grades did you get overall then?



Sumedh: Overall, I got a grade of band 8.

Ben: Excellent.

Sumedh: It was-- yes. **It was 9 in listening-- 9 in reading, 8.5 in listening, 8 in speaking, and 7 in writing.**

Ben: Wow! Excellent. Well done. Well done and the story about the writing, it doesn't stop there, did it? Because I think-- did you get a 6.5 first?

Sumedh: Yes, I got a 6.5.

Ben: Wow! And you threw it back in the examiner's face, basically or the polite way of saying--

Sumedh: I would not say that. I just gave it back.

SUMEDH'S JOURNEY TO REMARK REQUEST

Ben: Yes. You asked for a re-mark, yes?

Sumedh: Yes. Basically, I asked for a re-mark.

Ben: What made you ask for a remark?



Sumedh: I don't know. I was really pissed that I did not clear the exam. As soon as I got the TRF in my hand, I mailed it back fifteen minutes after I got the TRF in my hand because I was really pissed.

Ben: Annoyed.

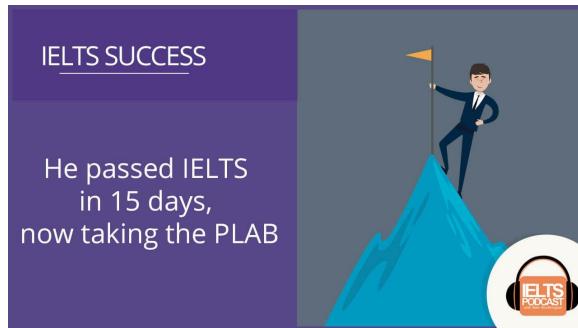
Sumedh: Yes, annoyed. That's-- okay. So, the course is still on then.

Ben: Wow! So, you sent it back and then how long did it take for them to return it?

Sumedh: They took a lot of time like on the 27th day of the-- after I had sent the form, I got the message from them that your scores have been changed.

Ben: Wow!.

Sumedh: Then I gave-- yes, and then I gave a call to the helpline number and they were like-- the first person who picked up the call was Nikita and I asked her about the score and all and she was like congratulations maybe your scores have been changed and I was like okay, that's good. Are they increased? And she's like I'm sorry I'm not at liberty to tell you that. Then I asked her to transfer me to a supervisor and I asked them that is it possible that when a score is changed it can be reduced to a lesser band and he was like I'm really sorry, Sumedh, You'll get your TRF within four or five days and you'll know then.



Ben: Wow! Wow! It's like a soap opera, isn't it?

Sumedh: Exactly.

Ben: Wow!

Sumedh: And I received the TRF one and a half months later.

Ben: Oh my word!

Sumedh: You know why? They had lost my address--

Ben: Oh my word!

Sumedh: --and I gave them a call after 15 days and I was like what's the matter you haven't sent me the shipping details, nothing And they were like can you hold on for a minute and I had to stay online for 30 minutes--

Ben: Oh my word!

Sumedh: --and they were like we are extremely sorry, Sumedh, that we had the incorrect address. I was like you have my passport, right? The address is on there, but they're like no, we do not look at the photos and all. You have to manually update it and I was like okay. I updated



it once, I gave them a call five days later and they were like we have the incorrect address. I was like do I have to do this again? And they were like yes.

Ben: Oh my word!

Sumedh: 45 minutes later, it was updated, but it was public holiday.

Ben: Oh my word! Wow! The drama. The drama. So, basically-- so you did get it in the end, yes?

Sumedh: Yes, yes. I got it two and a half months later.

Ben: Two and a half months! Oh my word! But did that slow your application down for the UK, anything like that?

Sumedh: Not as such. I could have applied for the exam dates-- I could have applied for a center in India, but because of this, I had to apply for a center in basically London. So, I had the increased cost of traveling to London now.

Ben: Right. Wow! So, this is quite a big inconvenience, isn't it?

Sumedh: Yes.



Ben: Wow! Okay. All right. So, we're coming to an end now. What would you say to any students that might be on the fence about joining the course or not?

Sumedh: The course helped me a lot and I think she would not air the episode if I did say that you don't have to opt for the course, but you should opt for the course because listening, reading, and speaking, you can crack those, but writing is an essential and I have had a whole lot of friends like I had two friends from Dubai who gave the exam for the third time and they could not cover-- they could not clear the writing test and I cracked it at first go. That was because of the course. I don't think I would have been able to do that.

Ben: Okay, good points there. Good points. Yes, it never fails to surprise me the students that will do test after test after test basically investing their money with the British Council and IELTS IDP when they really-- and I always say this, but it's usually a much better, much stronger, much wiser investment if you invest in yourself, in your own capabilities whether it be for the exam, whether it's buying a course on human resource management or whether it's a course on medicine or whatever, but usually the best investments, the most profitable investments are the ones when you invest in yourself.



SUMEDH'S FINAL TIPS

Okay. So, we're coming towards an end of the interview now, Sumedh, and do you have anything else that you would like to share with the audience? Any tips or advice that you would like to share to help them get similar results to what you've got?

Sumedh: I would like to say that **when you're watching Ben's videos, just make sure that you have pen and paper with you because it's really necessary to take down notes because without them you can't watch the video once again, right?** So, you have to have your points made.

Ben: Are you talking about the essay corrections?

Sumedh: The essay collections, yes, but also the writing course videos.

Ben: Ah, got you. Yes, you can watch them again. Of course, you can.

Sumedh: You can watch them again, but you don't have the time to watch them again.



Ben: I see. I see. I see. Okay.

Sumedh: You cannot invest so much time.

Ben: Okay, okay.

Sumedh: That's what I meant.

Ben: Yes. It depends. Some students, they prepare like more than 15 days, so they do have the time. Not everybody is as casual as you, Sumedh.

Sumedh: By the way, I wanted to inform you that I still can watch your videos. So, are you going to close the account?

Ben: I will do, yes. I will do. I will do. Got you.

Sumedh: So, I save you some money right there.

Ben: Yes, yes. We can close your account. You only want to watch these videos once anyway. That's why I wasn't worried. Just watch them once and never again, not even rewind. Okay. But thank you. Thank you, Sumedh, for that.

Yes, I think that's everything and I just want to just summarize for the audience that yes, Sumedh did leave it a little bit too close to the wire, so to speak, to prepare, but it just shows



that the course can be completed within like 10 days. We aim for really fast turnarounds for the essay corrections and we do aim for results.

We are kind of like results-driven and we do aim for [high-quality feedback](#) from native English speakers. Sometimes I do it. It's usually the teachers nowadays, but we've got a great team there and they're really invested in your success. So, yes. It's just food for thought if you've got the test coming up or if you've taken the test a few times.

So, I think that's everything, Sumedh. Thank you very much for joining us on this call. It's been very entertaining and I've just enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

Sumedh: I did enjoy talking to you too, Ben.

Ben: Excellent.

Sumedh: Thanks a lot for the exam.

Ben: No, you're welcome, buddy. You're welcome and I'm glad that you got the results that you wanted and I wish you all the best in sunny Manchester.

Sumedh: I'm looking forward to it.

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltpodcast.com