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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.

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## INTRODUCTION

**Ben:** How to best prepare for your IELTS Speaking Part 2 with cue cards. In this tutorial, we are going to look at IELTS Speaking Part 2 the long turn with the cue cards and this tutorial is going to help you because we're not only going to look at some advice or essential tips but we're also going to look at some structures and some frameworks.



Some of these we will have mentioned these before in previous tutorials, but still, I'm going to give you some more examples and it's also useful just to hear these structures again in case you missed them and just to remind you and also if you didn't write them down that time, then you can write them down this time.

Now, before we jump into this, I just want to briefly mention corona, okay, and you probably are all aware of this, what's happening at the moment. It is pretty crazy. It's totally unprecedented. I just got a little bit of advice that I want to say about this that we've got to really look at the positive side of this. Perhaps you've got more time to prepare, which is always a bonus. If you are worried that you're going to miss deadlines, then let me just put it in perspective, okay?

I've been following a lot of higher education press and media and there is a lot of talk about flexibility at the moment with regards to accepting students. Some of the universities are not going to be able to recruit as much so therefore, they might even lower the criteria for entering



the courses. Basically, I think there's going to be a lot of understanding and a lot of empathy regarding applications for universities and it wouldn't surprise me if this extends to immigration as well. So, just bear this in mind.

Also, as I've said in previous tutorials that let's try and look for the other benefits. Well, we've got longer to prepare. If your exam hasn't changed and you've got it in two weeks, then you've really got to pull out all the stops and focus like crazy because this could be your last time for months until you can do it again, okay?

And as I said in the previous tutorials once this blows over, if you're watching the media you might have the impression that this is a dooms day scenario, that it's the end of the world, but look. I'm 38 years old. I've seen probably about two or three recessions. Everything gets back to normal afterwards, okay?



The same is going to happen with this corona. China is slowly getting back to normal now and what's happening? Well, they're adding more capacity for the IELTS test. Also, they're moving their examiners around. They are holding the tests in bigger test centers. So, things will get back to normal and when they do get back to normal, if you've been following the advice that I've been talking about for the last week or two, then you will have taken full advantage of this situation and you will have an extra month or two months of preparation under your belt, okay?

### **MAKE USE OF YOUR TIME**

The worst thing you can probably do is just to say I've got two months to prepare now. I've got a month to prepare. I'm just going to chill. I'm just going to watch Netflix. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Take this as a real opportunity. Basically, everything is lined up for you now. You've got home office. You're at home not much else to do except for preparing for IELTS.



So, have a look at my previous tutorial about setting up a routine, about all the practical exercises that you can do and trust me, you'll be in a much better state to tackle this exam.

## WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SPEAKING EXAM

Right then, let's jump into it. So, what happens when you've got your cue card? Well, you've got one minute to prepare and usually, your answer is going to take about two minutes and you'll have a few follow-up questions afterwards. Now, don't be scared if you're interrupted. By the way, this is one of the benefits of recording your answers as we've mentioned in previous tutorials because you'll get a feel for how long two minutes sounds like and for how long your answers should be.

2) Avoid being surprised by the topic. How do you do this? Well, you get hold of as many cue cards as you can, write out answers, review the vocabulary-- we're going to go into this in more



detail. Be careful. There isn't really a wrong answer, but do be aware of going off-topic. If you've got a cue card talking about a childhood friend and you're talking about your bike you had when you were a child, then it's not going to be the best answer, obviously.

Another point: take note. Develop a mind map. Brainstorm useful vocabulary. Now, useful vocabulary to research and to prepare for is basically adjectives to describe people-- strong, intelligent, beautiful, ugly, dumb-- there's a million adjectives. We're not going to go into them.

Likewise, adjectives for describing places. I remember I had an English teacher actually and he used to say the worst word in the English language is nice because it's just so generic. It's so vague. I had an ex-girlfriend and she used to use nice for everything. Fair enough, she wasn't a native English speaker, but I always, always tried to enrich and improve her vocabulary, which she found rather irritating, naturally.



Anyway, so if you're describing buildings as nice, if you're describing people as nice, if you're describing a holiday as nice, just be aware that there's other vocabulary that's infinitely and immensely more powerful than nice. Delicious food, not nice food. Warm friends, not nice friends. Rich and detailed buildings, not nice buildings, okay?

Right then, you also want to sort of like jot down details. You do not want to write out your complete talk, okay? So, just write a few points down. Now, when you are developing your ideas for the cue card, they are not going to come in a linear fashion. In most cases, what happens is that we'll think about a childhood friend and we might think about the hair and then we might think about oh yes, his dad was also a ginger, so we might write that down. Then we might think his dad also had that big garden that he never wanted any of us to play on.

Just write them down as they come. That's the best way. Capture these ideas then afterwards-- this is what we do in the Speaking Confidence Course, by the way-- then afterwards, go back and



review them and start putting numbers next to them and ordering them. This way, you're going to have a more coherent Speaking Part 2 exam.

### PARAPHRASING IS GREAT

Next one: if you can paraphrase as well, this is fantastic. I've heard teachers recommend saying the bullet point in a question form. What was my fondest memory with this person? Well, I would avoid that because you can't get points for reading from the cue card whereas if you paraphrase, you can definitely get points.

So, for example, on the cue it says you should include what your best memory is with this friend. So, how do you paraphrase that? Well, you can say something like if I remember correctly, one of the best most cherished memories I have with this friend, Simon, is when we took all his



sister's dolls that we found in the garage and we cut off all the heads, whatever. We actually did that. Can you believe it? That was a long time ago, anyway.

Final suggestion which has been working really well with a lot of students. As you've heard me say before, write out your answers. Now, this is kind of scary actually because we were doing this in the online class and we were reviewing people's answers that they had written out. By the way, we are doing online classes now because of COVID because of corona and we do about four classes a week at different times. Usually, there's about 10-12 of us and sometimes we'll go through writing, we'll go through speaking.

Anyway, in this particular session, the students were sending me their written answers for the speaking because it's not the best environment for 10 of the students to listen to another student speaking whereas if they just wrote it down and send it to me, I can give them some advice.



So, I copy-pasted it from the chat into the Google Doc and as we're working, we saw that there's a blue highlight underneath certain phrases and this is fantastic because it gives you suggestions as to how to phrase it correctly and in 90% of the cases, it was perfect. It was the exact same correction myself, a native English speaker, would have suggested.

Now, on the one hand, this is absolutely amazing and insanely valuable for students like you who are studying at home. On the other hand, it's a warning for people like me; English teachers who might be made redundant soon by Google. I was going to say I had mixed emotions, but I didn't really. I'm not that worried about my career being replaced by Google. However, it was a wake-up sign. It was like hey, you cannot be doing this forever. Eventually, you will be replaced by Google or some other software.

So, what I want to say there is that just to summarize write out your answers, put them into a Google Doc. You will see the blue squiggly line underneath and then you can just hover your



cursor over it and it's going to give you the suggestion to improve the grammar, to make it correct grammar and trust me, 90% of the cases it was perfect. So, you would be very foolish not to take advantage of this. So hopefully, you're writing out your answers.

Also, this is another technique that we were talking about. Write out your answers then go back, review them. You can get Google to help you with the grammar and you can also just look for opportunities to improve your written explanation, your written answer.

For example, words like good, bad can always be improved. Likewise with the superlatives; good, better, best. You can usually switch those out for more advanced ones. All the adjectives as well. You could probably upgrade like we were just saying. So, it's really a good opportunity.

Now, the next point and this is a really good point because what I want to mention is the structure. Now, there are lots of advantages for using a structure. This is why we teach it in the



online course for the writing. When you use a structure, when you have a framework to follow and you've learned this framework and you've learned it to such a level that it's almost like muscle memory-- it becomes automatic-- what it does then is it's a path to follow so you no longer have to think that much about which direction you are going.

Exactly the same for the writing. Once you've got this framework under control, then you can start thinking about what to put in the framework, what language you can put in the framework. With the speaking, we are developing a very similar structure, a very similar framework. It's basic at the moment I will admit, but we don't want to be overly structured because at the end of the day, speaking is a spontaneous activity.

However, the basics of this framework go like this. Let's see. The recent family memory-- assuming we had a cue card about family memory-- the recent family memory I would like to share with you is one about my brother's birthday. It was such a terrific experience. I've upgraded



from good to terrific because I'm following my own advice. Anyway, it was such a terrific experience mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, all my best friends were there and my mum made the most amazing cake that everybody was commenting about. Secondly, I also managed to see my aunts and my uncles and all my cousins and I rarely got to see them and it was just good seeing everybody mixed together.

Now, if I'd have written that out, I'd have seen that I used good. So, instead of good, I could have said it was just invaluable seeing them all together mixing and playing, sharing stories, experiences, and adventures, okay?

So, just by putting that firstly and secondly in there, I've got a structure that's probably going to help me develop my answer and it's going to improve the coherence now because I'm using this



signposting language. It's just a very simple structure and it's not bad. It's quite easy to implement. Just get used to it. Get into the habit of doing this and it will sound more natural.

The next point I want to mention is what I was talking about before. I've said it like three times now, but there's no harm in saying it again. If you look at your writing or you're recording your writing and you're listening back and you hear yourself say something like it was really good or the food was just really good, upgrade your language and just use something like secondly, the food was just simply delicious. Just exactly the same point that I was harping on about when I was talking about nice. Let's use simply delicious. That sounds much tastier than really good.

The next point: after we've developed our answers-- sorry, to develop our answers-- we've got the firstly or secondly, the food was simply delicious. Let's develop it further. We're going to follow a structure from general to specific. Secondly, the food was just simply delicious. For example, the crème brûlée my mum made was all but gone within two minutes of serving. Give



an example there. Examples will force us to use more specific vocabulary such as crème brûlée which is just a type of dessert as you probably know.

Finally, while we are writing out our answers and we're looking for opportunities to improve, not only are we going to improve the vocabulary by switching out the adjectives or even adding some new grammar structures that we want to practice but we can also add some collocations, okay? These are quite easy the ones I'm going to share and they're quite universal.

For example, if my memory serves me well-- you don't have to say it like that. I was just exaggerating. If my memory serves me well, it was in 1999 that my mum made this amazing crème brûlée. Another one: if I remember correctly, it was the crème brûlée that just disappeared within two minutes. These are quite easy to add and they make you sound like a native English



speaker because if I start a sentence if my memory, I'm pretty much expecting you to say serves me well.

The other advantage of using these is that it's just much more effective learning a six-word phrase, a four-word phrase. It's much more effective learning that than memory or single words by themselves. Just learn a chunk. In the Speaking Course that we are launching very soon, we're going to have much more of these collocations because they are useful. They make you sound natural. They give you time to construct the rest of your sentence and you also sound like a native English speaker when you use them because this is how we speak in England.

Next: the time tried, old, and tested record yourself. This has never been easier. You have your mobile. Pay attention to what you could improve, but also, don't beat yourself up. For example, my girlfriend she hates the sound of her own voice, so I'm regularly playing her voice messages out loud in front of her. She hates it, but anyway, everybody hates their own voice and you need



to get used to listening to your own voice if you are going to use this technique and you should use this technique because it's quite cost effective.

Don't be too hard on yourself. When you're listening, you probably want to make two lists; what you did well, what you could improve. Your first reaction is going to be oh, what a disaster! That's totally normal, but just remind yourself hey, this isn't my own language. If Ben spoke my own language, it would be an absolute train crash. So, just give yourself a break. Don't beat yourself up. It's scary that the default reaction would be I sound terrible. Just give yourself a break.

Listen to it. Identify those areas that need improving. Identify the areas that you think sounded good. Trust your judgement on this and then record again. It's probably going to be easier if you are reading from your Google Doc that has already been corrected to a certain extent.



Next one: you can do this again in a few days. This is normal. This is obvious. Don't just do a whole day of speaking practice and leave it for a week. Try and get your practicing frequently. Remember that's how memory works; usually through frequency, the more times you see it. As I said a million times, repetition is the mother of all learning.

TED talks; try and listen to them. Mimic them. Speak like they speak. They've had lots of training. Before you get up and do a TED talk, you've got to give it to somebody and you got to do it in front of them or give them a summary, a video and they'll usually give you feedback like okay, improve this. Add a pause here. Slow down there.

So, these have been improved already. They've already had some feedback on them and the features that have been suggested to the speakers will usually be along the lines of emphasize this, put in a pause here and you will hear them. You will hear that they've been-- you will hear



certain features such as a pause, such as the change in intonation. So, what I'm saying is these are professional speakers that have been tutored and you can definitely learn from them.

Next one: when you are writing out your cue card and you've got no idea about it, jump online. Get the specific vocabulary that you need and don't just learn a list. Try and learn it in context. Try and learn the whole fragment and you will hear there are going to be some big improvements if you do it this way.

### **MASTER THE SUPERLATIVE**

Next one: master the superlative. This is insanely valuable. It's going to add some color to your talk and also you're going to need it for Academic Task 1 as well. So, if you learn this grammar point, you've got two for the price of one. Learn it-- don't just learn it actually. Master it. Use it



in every sentence for the rest of your life-- no, obviously, but there's no reason why you can't master it.

How do you master it? Well, you can review the rules. Then you go online, do some superlative online quizzes and then you get some feedback on your writing and you'll be able to ascertain whether you've written it correctly.

### **MEMORISE OPENING PHRASES**

Next one: memorize opening phrases. A good one that I've always been using is I'd like to tell you about a childhood friend. I would like to tell you about the local festivals in my county Yorkshire or when it comes to childhood friends, the one I particularly remember is Simon. He



was almost ginger and he was a terrible, terrible influence. For example, once we found his sister's dolls blah, blah, blah.

So, there are lots of different phrases you can memorize that will just help you sound more natural. Initially, if you've got your exam coming up very soon, then you want to memorize the universal phrases such as I'd like to tell you about... or when it comes to ... If your exam has been postponed and you've got more time to prepare, then you can obviously learn more phrases.

Also, when you're listening to me, there's no harm in writing down phrases that you think would be useful for yourself in your own speaking exam or for your own English language development. You need to be alert and just copy these down. I do try and exaggerate them a little bit or pause afterwards or explain them if I have used a collocation. For example, I usually say as



we say in the UK. Hopefully, you've been writing those down and there's no harm to go back and listen to previous tutorials and write them down.

All right, final ones: these are quite straightforward now. Practice this skill of making notes. It's probably a very useful skill and practice numbering your notes so you know what to talk about in order and then the final one is practice with other people.

In the forum at [forum.ieltspodcast.com](http://forum.ieltspodcast.com), we're going to be hopefully matching up speaking partners as well. So, if you are at home and you've got some more time-- if you got some free time, then we're going to be matching up speaking partners with each other, okay?

So, that's everything from me today. Remember if you've got your exam and it's been postponed, then it's probably a good time to invest in yourself, to invest in the course and start working. It's probably a good time to improve your preparation schedule or your preparation plan and one of



the most effective ways, as you probably know, one of the most effective ways of preparing for this exam is to get professional feedback and guidance and structure.

That's exactly what the online course does. You've got a structure to follow. A couple of tutorials a day. Then you write your essay, you send it in to us, we'll give you feedback within 24 hours, send it back to you, and now you know exactly what your next task is. It's to watch another tutorial, review the feedback we gave you and we've probably included the next steps for you and then send it back and write some more essays, send them back and this is how the feedback and improvement cycle works at IELTS podcast.

Likewise for the speaking. At the moment we do not have feedback there. We just have the Speaking Confidence Course. We aim to get feedback, but we're just struggling with the logistics of it, but we are on it.



Just remember as well you're not alone in this. There are a lot of students going through the same. This is why we've launched the forum and we're here to help. So, keep your head up high, keep moving forward, you will get through this.

And just one last thing; this corona virus it's making life hard for us all, but it's not going to be like this forever. As I said, things will get back to normal. I don't know when. I'm guessing two, three months possibly more. It depends. Each country is going to be different. Things are going to get back to normal and you'll probably look back and you'll think wow! I had two or three weeks of doing nothing and I could have been nailing the IELTS. I could have been really going for one whole band score improvement. So, just keep that in mind, okay, and keep moving forward. Take care and all the best.

[Music]



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