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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

[Music]

Ben: Hello, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we are going to be talking with Amandeep who got 8.5 in the reading. Is that right, Amandeep?

Amandeep: Yes.



Ben: That is amazing and the reason I know Amandeep is because he has been on our online classes and he's been participating and one day, I changed the timetable rather last minute and he was the only one who checked the schedule and we ended up having a private class and we worked through Task 2.

So, let me just give you an overview of what's going to happen on this call. We're going to talk to Amandeep about his 8.5 in reading, then we're going to look at-- well, Amandeep is going to explain the IELTS indicator test, and we're going to look briefly at Canadian immigration because right now with all this corona thing going on or the coronavirus, it's probably going to be very interesting to hear Amandeep's situation with regards to the Canadian immigration. It's quite interesting I thought.



And then at the end, we're going to briefly look at IELTS Writing Task 2 because in the online class, Amandeep was struggling with idea generation and paragraph construction. Is that right, Amandeep?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Okay. Good, good. I just wanted to be accurate there. Let's jump straight into it. Amandeep, 8.5 in the reading. How did you-- well, before we jump into the band scores-- I'm all over the place-- tell us about yourself, Amandeep. That's probably the best place to start.

Amandeep: Well, I moved to Canada as an international student and after completing my program as a mechanical engineering technician now I'm a graphic designer and I'm on a work permit and currently residing in Canada as a worker.



Ben: Right. So, you started on a student visa. Is that right?

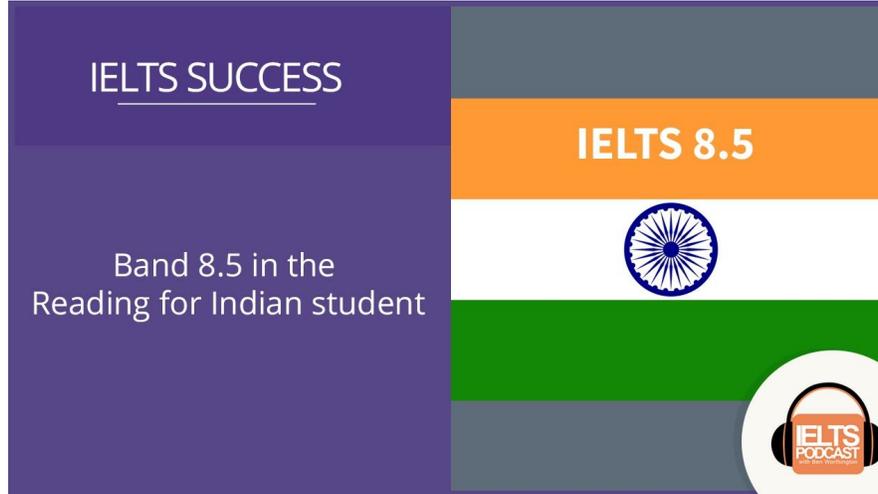
Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: And now you are in the process of going for PR. Is that right?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Beautiful. Okay and along the way, you have switched careers if I heard correctly.

Amandeep: Actually, right now I work as a graphic designer. Most often, people mistaken the graphic designer, but I am more like a user interface graphic designer working for a building automation company which I studied while I was a student. It was a part of my course as electromechanical engineering technician program.

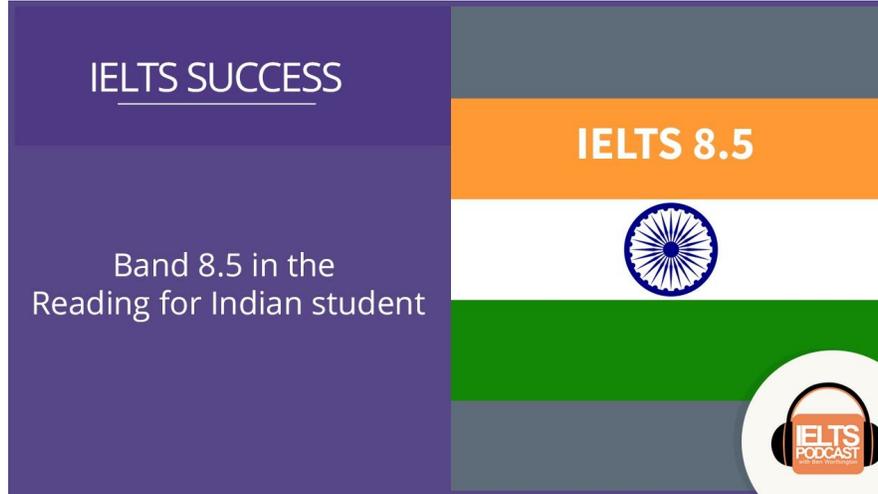


Ben: Oh, I see. I see. Wow! Okay, that's interesting. Right. Let's talk about your IELTS band 8.5 in the reading. Now, I know from talking with you previously that you are kind of-- would you say you're quite a systematic person?

Amandeep: Yes, I am.

Ben: Yes, I thought so. I got that impression. Okay. So, can you tell us how did you get this 8.5 in the reading?

Amandeep: So, this is going to be my third time attempting for IELTS exam in order to get-- my main goal is to get 7 in writing. I mean 7 in writing, 7 in speaking, and 7 in reading, and 8 in listening which isn't my main goal. In my first attempt of IELTS, I got 7 bands in reading, but in all others I got 8 in speaking and 8 in listening and I got 6.5, but then after that--



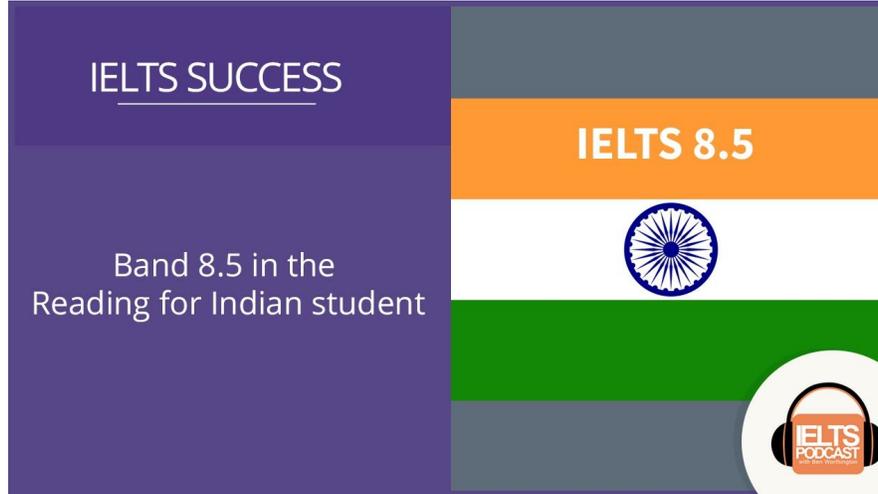
At that time I took a coaching for IELTS preparation. However, I can't blame my tutor. I didn't put much effort into it either.

Ben: Why not?

Amandeep: And then when I attempted for-- when I went for IELTS exam second time, I studied all the Cambridge books 1-12. I did all the reading by myself and I happened to get 8.5.

Ben: Wow! Okay. Let's just rewind a bit. Why didn't you study with this IELTS tutor that you hired? It seems crazy.

Amandeep: There was kind of lack of motivation too more over the way the tutor was explaining. I wasn't kind of inculcating at all. Like okay, so most of the tutors they just tell you okay, remember this phrase. They don't tell you a reason behind this phrase, why this is



happening, or why you need to remember it. That's why I was kind of overwhelmed by the whole situation.

Ben: Right. Okay, okay, fair enough. So, then to work on your speaking score, you must have been ridiculously motivated to just dive into all these books. What happened? What changed?

Amandeep: Actually, in this summer I had enough free time because I'm a morning person, so I work from 7:00 to 3:00. I can work any time during the day, but I prefer to work in the morning. So, I like last summer, I have enough time in the evening and I was like okay, this time I need to get 7 in writing, too and I need to boost my other scores as well. So, I just went through all the books.



Ben: Wow! Okay. This time you said I need to get 7 this time. What was different from the previous times?

Amandeep: You mean 7 in my exam which [unintelligible 00:06:24.11] happen or?

Ben: You said over the summer, you were working mornings and then you said that I needed to get the 7 this time, in this exam. That situation; what had changed? What forced you to get the 7 this time?

Amandeep: So, apparently one of my classmates-- I don't want to brag about myself, but in studies, I was always better than her. However, she got 7 in writing in her first attempt. So, I was like what's wrong with me? I know I speak better than her, I write better than her. I just need to bring all of myself together and I just need to focus on it and show her that I do better than her.



Ben: Good for you! Is this person your friend?

Amandeep: She is, yes.

Ben: Does she know that you...

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Does she know that you compete with her so fiercely?

Amandeep: Actually, she does know because back home too, we were in the same high school. If she was on the first like she scored the first position in the class, I was second. If I was first, she was second. So, we always had a tough competition.

Ben: Okay, okay. That's good. That sounds healthy. So, she was your inspiration basically.



Amandeep: Yes, yes.

Ben: That's fantastic. Okay and so it seems like your strategy was-- with the books-- just sit down and did you have any sort of like system in place?

Amandeep: I did have a system. Like one day I was just-- not one day. One whole week I was just going through true and false and not given. Another whole week-- I'm talking about the reading right now-- so another whole week I was going through paraphrasing each paragraph and then choosing a heading for every paragraph. Then another whole week I was going to filling the blanks in that order and then another week for multiple choice question.

Ben: Why did you do it like that?



Amandeep: Because I find-- to be honest, for me I was kind of struggling with true and false. So, if I was doing one reading in a day, it happened to have true/false and the next day when I was going to study again it didn't have a true or false so sometimes I forget why it has to be false, why it is not given. So, once I remember it, I wanted to practice as much I could about the same topic. So that's why I choose that strategy.

Ben: Wow! That's really intelligent. Very smart. Wow! So, just for the listeners just to summarize, Amandeep has a friend who he hates losing to. Let's just clarify that. He hates losing to her and she beat him. So, Amandeep got mad, went and bought-- how many books?

Amandeep: All 12.



Ben: Wow! Bought all 12 books and then spent a week mastering each section. So, one week multiple choice, next week paraphrasing, next week yes/no/not given and so on and so forth until you had mastered pretty much every section. Is that right?

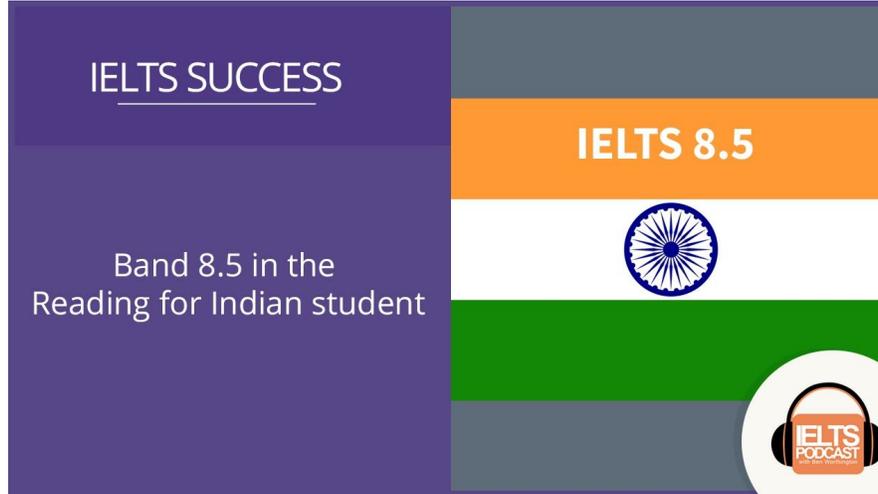
Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Genius. Absolute genius and I guess-- how long did it take you to do all of that?

Amandeep: I remember I bought exam on 23rd July. I started preparing for it just a month before that. So, a month.

Ben: Wow! Okay and your previous score in reading before you did the strategy?

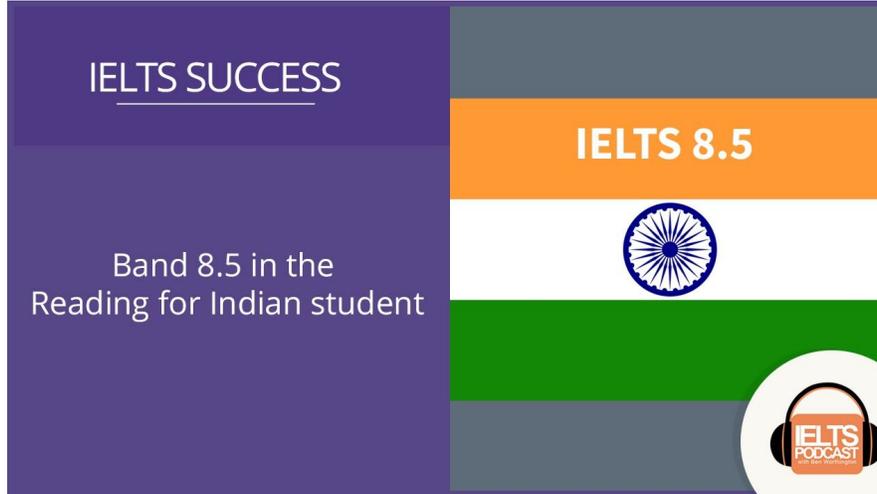
Amandeep: 7.



Ben: 7? Wow! That is fantastic. Good for you, Amandeep. Good for you and then what happened with your other scores?

Amandeep: So, for my other scores also like in speaking, I boosted my score from 7 to I think-- yes, from 7 to 8, too because at that time, I started practicing more English. Other than my native language, I tried to talk to people like while I was in a library and at that time, I started a new job, too where there wasn't any person who talks in my native language. So, that kind of helped me too to improve my speaking.

And then about listening, I practiced all the listening section from the Cambridge books. I know why I wasn't able to improve my writing score because I wasn't getting any feedback from anybody. It was just me practicing and I wasn't getting any feedback.



Ben: Very interesting. Wow! Were you getting feedback with the speaking?

Amandeep: I wasn't getting any feedback for the speaking, but I know that I can-- I went through this [unintelligible 00:11:56.17] how the speaker is talking about every topic, how much time I should assign to a particular question or how should I talk about any idea. So, I was kind of confident about that.

Ben: Okay, okay. Whereas before you never really put that much effort in, this time you've done some research and you felt much more confident and you were speaking more in everyday situations. Is that right?

Amandeep: Yes.



Ben: Got you, got you and you said you started speaking more like in the library, for example. What were you doing just to get more conversations?

Amandeep: So, not only a library. I was doing two jobs at that time. One was a customer service job where I happen to talk to customer whole day. It was like a wholesale store. So, I was talking to customers trying to be a good salesperson. So, that's how I improve my speaking and then my main job, which is the graphic designer, I had to go for meetings with my manager or with team members even phone calls, video calls with clients.

So, that improved the speaking part too and in library as well, I found a circle of people who were kind of [unintelligible 00:13:23.08] of me, but they were not going for IELTS exam. Some of them were going for TOEFL. Some of them were just going for normal ESL exam. So, we were just studying together and speaking together.

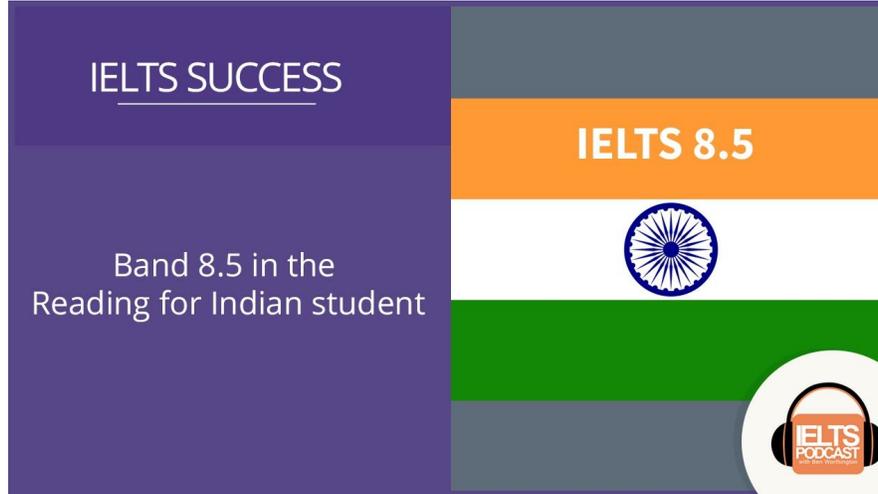


Ben: Wow! That's quite fortunate, isn't it?

Amandeep: It is, yes.

Ben: Wow and I love the fact that you actually decided to get paid to improve your speaking skills. You took this job and you would get paid. A lot of people will pay somebody else to improve their speaking skills whereas you were like okay, I'm going to turn this around and I'm going to get paid for improving and for speaking more. So, that's genius. Well done there, Amandeep.

Now, the next thing I want to ask you about is the-- before we get on to IELTS Writing Task 2 because you just did briefly mention about feedback and now you're getting feedback, aren't you?

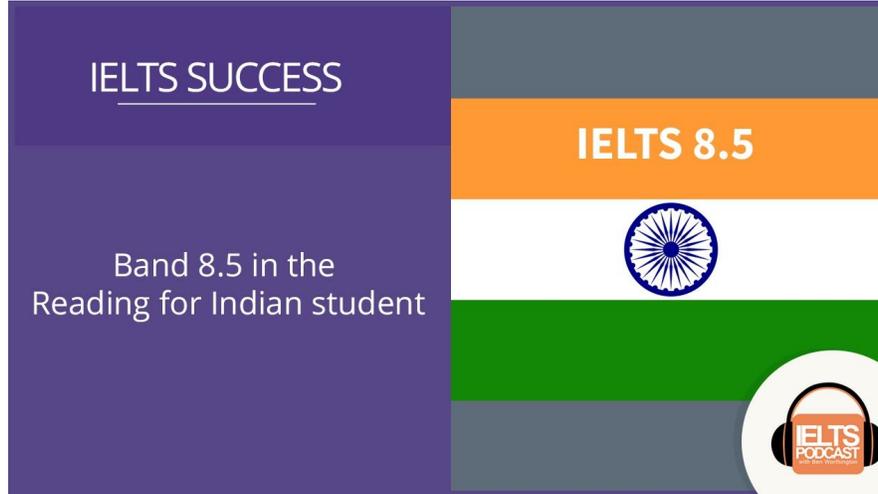


Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Good, good. Okay. Right. Before we jump into that, let's quickly talk about the IELTS indicator. So, you were doing a lot of research about this. Because of coronavirus, your situation changed a lot, didn't it? How did it change your situation?

Amandeep: So, actually corona kind of proved to be a boom kind of benefited my situation and all the students in my situation in Canada because the international students who moved to Canada after high school there they don't have that many points. Canadian immigration system is based on a point system. So, your age has certain points, you get at a point for experience, you get a point for education level.

I was part of a group of students who moved after high school, so my education level was-- the points I was going to get for my education level was only 20-- I think I'm getting only 30 points



because I only completed two year program so far in Canada. Right now, the cut off-- before corona, the cut off was 475 or in between 480 to 490 and it even went over 500. It happened because the Canadian government did not-- they don't try to only give you permanent residency of people who are in Canada. They try to immigrate skilled workers from all over the world as well. So, all the people who were more skilled than me they had more points. So, that's why the cut off was never going to come down.

However, when the corona thing happened-- because of this pandemic, Canada shut down everything. They have allowed a complete lockdown, so Canada cannot bring any immigrants to Canada so they have to give the permanent immigration to the people who are residing in Canada at this moment.



So, there were not enough people who had points about 460 so the point system had to drop because Canada has a kind of-- they have a target to hit each year. Like this year, they want to give immigration to I think over 100,000 people. Till 2022, their main target is they need to immigrate 300,000 people into Canada. So, they need to give immigration to about 10,000 people every month in Canada.

So for that, then they had to drop the score. So, now the score came to 455 actually. If I had scored 7 bands in IELTS at that moment, my score would be 456. So, I could have got the invitation for immigration last week and still I know that because this lockdown they are not going to dial it back. So, it's going to stay this way until maybe July or August. So, that's why I want to kind of take-- benefit of this whole situation. So, I want to score 7 bands before June so that I will get 456 points before June and then I will get invitation.



Ben: Beautiful. Interesting. Very interesting. It's like I can hear your engineering background come through the way you talk about it everything is-- it's all organized, but I love the fact as well that you're taking advantage of this situation and it's totally favoring your situation and you're totally taking advantage of this.

So, just to summarize: basically, Canadian immigration system has to hit a target of-- I think you said 100,000 per year?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: And that's not going to happen this year because of the corona lockdown. So, they are lowering the bar for the students or for the potential applicants that are already in the country because no new fresh batch can come along. Is that right?



Amandeep: Yes, absolutely.

Ben: Wow! Okay and you are going to get band-- your aim is to get above band 7 in each of the disciplines before June, correct?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Okay and what if the test centers are closed in May or even in June?

Amandeep: Luckily, the premier of Ontario government-- I'm in residing in Ontario in Canada-- so the premier of Ontario government, Doug Ford, he announced yesterday that most of the business they will open on 12th May, so I'm hoping the IELTS center will be open back by end of May and I have already bought the exam to be on the safe side for the 21st May because most of



the business will be opening from 12th May. So, if it doesn't happen, I am going to postpone it. I can re-book it for any time in June.

Ben: Right. Interesting, interesting and I guess while you were at the website this is where you learnt about the IELTS indicator test. Is that right?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Okay and you're not taking this test because it's only for students who want to do the Academic. Is that right?

Amandeep: Yes, it's only for students and not all the universities and colleges are accepting this test and so it's not for general at all-- general category.

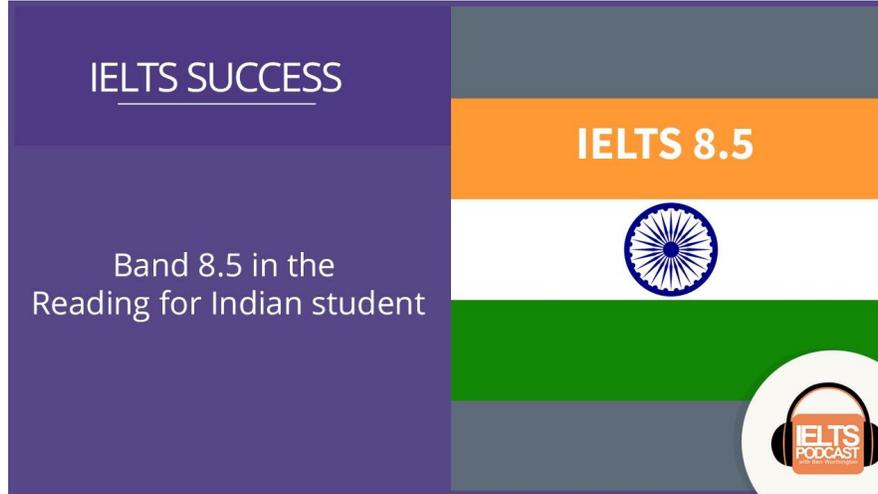


Ben: Got you, got you. Because we were talking about this before and it seems completely computer-based from your own home, correct?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Yes, this is remarkable. I like that and also, you've got to have your webcam on all the time, correct?

Amandeep: Not only a webcam. You need to install a particular software. I am not aware of the name of the software in your computer and that should be on so that you cannot try to share your screen with somebody else or try not to open any other browser; that's like Chrome or any other thing.



Ben: Okay. I don't know why I'm laughing, but I think you kind of preceded my next question. I didn't know about the software. That's quite interesting and they are watching you on the camera. I guess they're looking at your eyes in case you're looking at somebody else who could be guiding you.

Amandeep: I think-- yes, that's what they should be doing. Yes.

Ben: Wow and I wonder if it's like one invigilator for five or ten students just looking. Like a guard in a security office looking at ten different screens I imagine. Anyway, so you decided not to do this because they only offer it for IELTS Academic and I guess it's for students who want to get into university but need to prove or at least give an indication of what grade they have, correct?



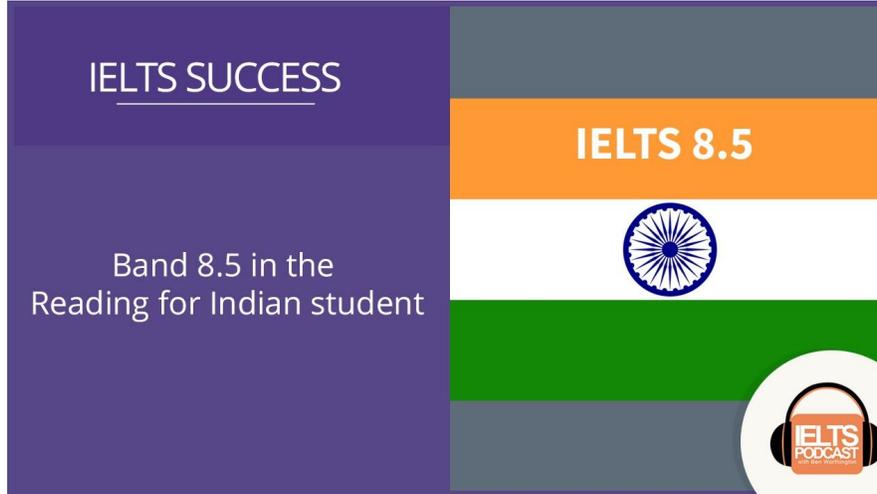
Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: Got you, got you and how much does this cost? Do you remember?

Amandeep: In terms of \$US, it's about 139 which comes up to \$170 to \$180 Canadian.

Ben: Interesting. Wow! The only downside to this is, as you said, it's indicator. It's not the official one and it doesn't seem like it's as widespread as the official one. So, it could be a solution if you are completely desperate and you need the Academic.

Amandeep: I think it can be because I wouldn't say it's too expensive. Rather than sitting at home, a person can just go for-- it can be just as a mock test so you will get to know how much you are expecting to get in your final IELTS exam; the real one.



Ben: Good point there. Absolutely good point and you could get a real insight. It's a shame the IELTS organization doesn't tell you which areas you need to improve. However, it is definitely better than just sitting at home, chilling home office or whatever in quarantine. Amandeep, are you maintaining those scores or are you just focusing entirely on the writing?

Amandeep: Right now my main goal, as I mentioned, that I need to get 7 in the writing, reading, and speaking. So, for me, getting 7 in speaking. Reading I don't think I would have any problem and another goal is to get-- it's not a goal. It's kind of a necessity for me in order to stay in Canada--the Canadian residence so I need to get 8 in listening. So, sometimes I am kind of practicing-- right now, I'm kind of focusing more on listening at the moment and writing.



Ben: Okay. All right. Listening and writing. Got you and with the listening, are you taking the same approach as you did with the reading just like isolating certain sections and focusing entirely on those?

Amandeep: At this moment, I'm just going to the question which are related to multiple choice questions and filling the blanks of a map like the map guide question. Those are the two questions where I find myself kind of hesitant and reluctant; not prepared for the question.

Ben: Okay. Interesting and with your writing, how are you working on improving your writing score?

Amandeep: So, for my writing score, I'm obviously following your course pattern, the Sentence Guide pattern and right now, I just finished writing the Writing Task 2 essay no.2 and I got the feedback as well. So, I'm very confident how I can improve it. Other than that, in my free time--



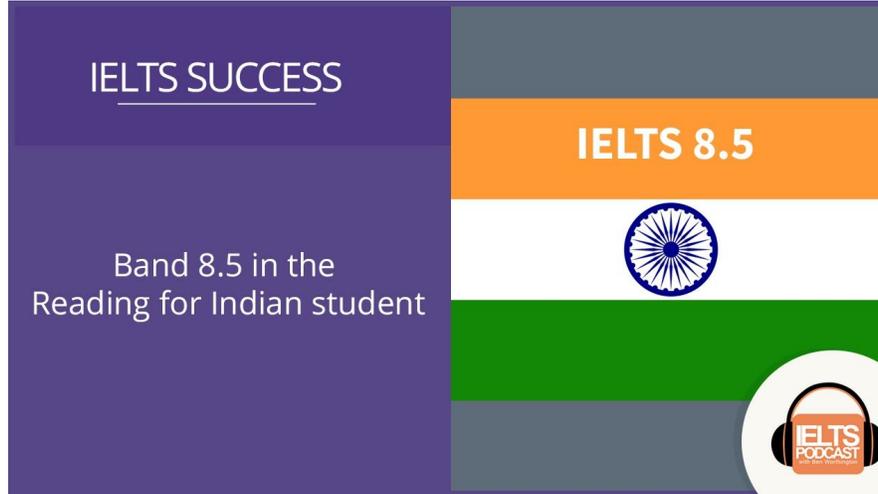
I try to send 1-2 essays every week for a feedback, but on my own, I try to write two essays every day as well and one in Task 1.

Ben: Wow! That's interesting. Wow! Because I remember when we were on the online class-- on the online call; it was just you and me-- we were focusing on idea development. Is that right?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: And this is the area-- because it was just Amandeep and myself, I asked him directly like hey, what are you struggling with and I think you said it was sort of like ideas or getting ideas that fit. Is that right?

Amandeep: Yes.



Ben: And Amandeep's issue was coming up with ideas that kind of corresponded to the question, but maintained the logic and maintained the connection to the question throughout the paragraph and that just basically means idea development. In that call, we were working with Amandeep's ideas and together we were saying okay, this is good, this is bad, and we were developing ideas for the essay. Now in the online classes, we've been doing this quite often. Basically, we just break down the Task 2 question, don't we?

Amandeep: Yes.

Ben: And we won't go into the exact steps now, but it's basically a question of-- I used to do this all the time in the classes, but now, I'm just like okay gang, okay students, what is this step? What are we doing next? What are we doing next? We've been dividing the students up into groups as well and we'll give them a paragraph each to think of ideas then to develop and then to



put into the C2 template and so on and so forth. So, what would you say you're struggling with at the moment with regards to your essays, Amandeep?

Amandeep: Right now, I think I am kind of getting hands on generating the idea, not only generating the idea but how to maintain throughout the whole paragraph by not getting distracted or moving to another idea in same paragraph. At this moment, I'm kind of focusing more of introduction [unintelligible 00:28:18.18] because I know if you know how to write a proper introduction, the whole essay goes well and if you don't know how to write that proper introduction you kind of lose the confidence that your essay is going to be bad too.

Ben: Okay. Interesting and just a little bit of a test here. Are you going to write your introduction-- is that going to be the first thing you write when you start your Task 2 answer?

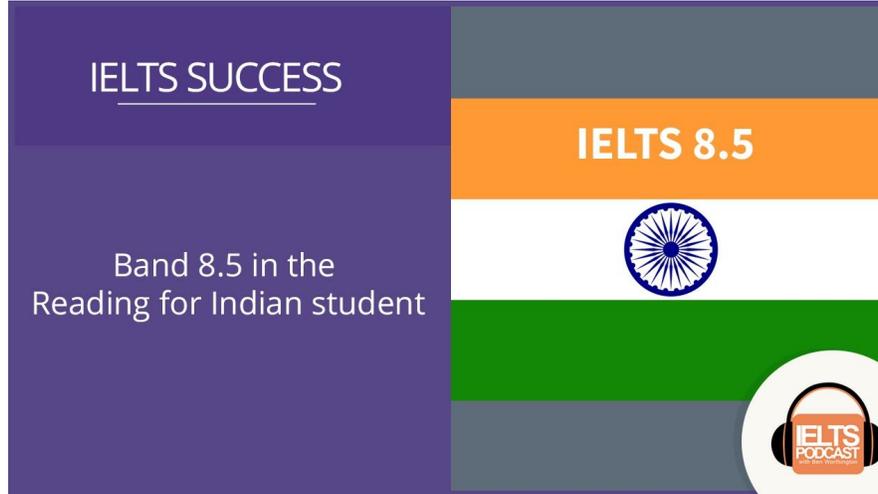


When you see the Task 2 question, what's the first thing you do? Is it to write your introduction or what?

Amandeep: No. Firstly, I do brainstorming; generate the ideas which I can completely develop for at least two paragraphs based on those ideas and then based on those ideas, I write the introduction.

Ben: Beautiful. Beautiful. Then what do you do next?

Amandeep: Then after I write the introduction-- first, after brainstorming, I write the introduction and then I try to make my ideas-- I try to turn them into more academic and a formal way and then after writing body paragraphs, I go for a conclusion and then I do start reading one time.



Ben: Okay. That's interesting. That's slightly different to what we've been doing on the online course, isn't it?

Amandeep: I don't think so because that's how-- when I say formal way I mean after brainstorming the ideas, I put it in C2 template.

Ben: Okay, okay, okay. Got you, got you. Okay. Now, we're back on track because this is exactly what we've been doing on the online course is basically looking at the question and then brainstorming ideas and then getting a rough idea for each paragraph and then starting at the introduction. When I've been doing it, we've been jumping straight into the body paragraphs and focusing the whole class on that and then doing introductions and conclusions later.

I wanted to invite Amandeep onto this call because I'm pretty confident that in a few months hopefully when corona has calmed down or when the world has gotten back to normal, hopefully



Amandeep will be back on the call and saying thanks to the course, we got a band 7 or I got a band 7, Ben. I think it's going to be a team effort mainly Amandeep, obviously, because he's the one doing the exam, but I wanted to get Amandeep on this call to not only share how he got his 8.5 but to also inform us there are some good things happening and it's up to us to make the most out of the situation that we are dealt be it doing an IELTS indicator test, be it applying for Canadian immigration or even just making use of this time in lockdown and studying and writing essays like Amandeep is doing.

The other reason was just to demonstrate that if you are struggling with the writing, if you're struggling with the IELTS, then now is a good time to invest in yourself. You don't need to invest in one of those academic-- what do you call it-- in one of those study schools or cram



centers or even one of those IELTS centers in your city because they are usually more expensive than necessary.

Now you've got the opportunity to study from home. A lot of students on our course are doing exactly this and they finish the course and they're carrying on buying more essay packs because they need to keep on writing, they need to maintain this skill.

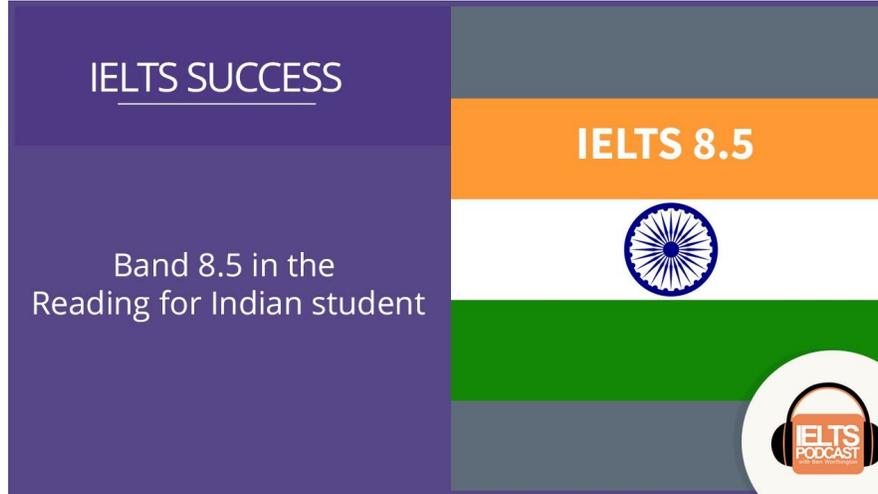
What I wanted to say is basically that Amandeep is on this call not only just to guide us and give us a little bit of an uplift or to uplift us at the moment but also I'm putting my name on the line again. I've done this before in the past. I'm so confident in our team. We've got Ellen and Daphne correcting essays and they're an absolute dream team and I'm pretty confident that Amandeep is going to be coming back with a 7 very soon. If not, we probably won't hear from him again. No, I'm just joking, Amandeep.



I'm not going to forget about this one. Amandeep has been an absolute star on the course. He's been joining the online classes as well. I shouldn't be saying this actually because now we might just kick back and relax and not put any effort in and then that would be a bit of a bad situation, but I'm pretty certain if he keeps on working hard, he'll get that band 7. Are you up for that, Amandeep? Do you want to come back on the call in a month or two-- in a month or two's time?

Amandeep: I hope so. I want to be back in a month.

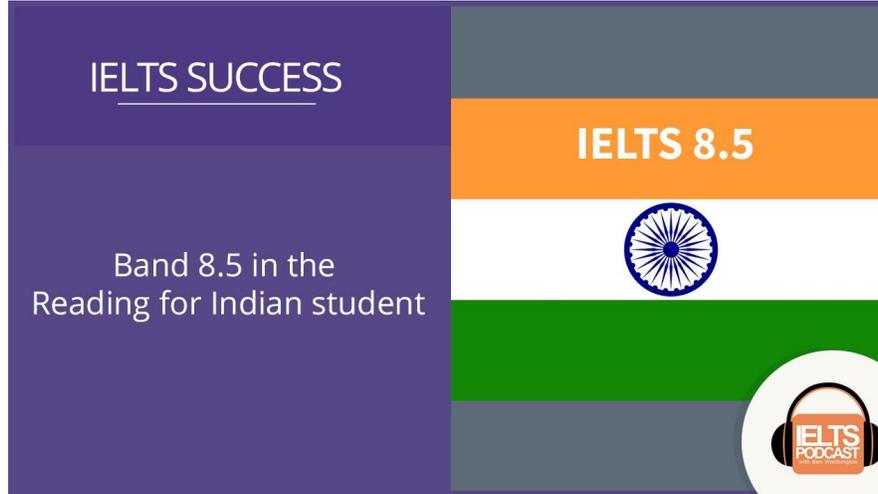
Ben: Beautiful. Beautiful. Okay. Well, I think that's everything now. Do you have anything that you would like to share with us, Amandeep, before we finish?



Amandeep: The only thing I want to share is that hard work is the key to success. So, if anyone is struggling with anything, the best you can do is taking the IELTS classes online and get the feedback, but they need to work on their own too.

Ben: Beautiful point. Beautiful point. As I used to say when I was an English teacher back in Spain a long time ago, I was just like I cannot learn English for you. I used to say that to the students and the thing is it's basically up to you. You've got to choose what you do with your time and like Amandeep said a lot of this is hard work from yourself.

We can guide you. We can make it easier. We can make it faster. We can make you improve quicker by giving you the feedback, but at the end of the day, if there are no essays to be corrected or no essays to give feedback on, we can't help you.



Okay. So, that's everything from me today. All I want to say in the finishing few minutes is just make the most of this situation. Start reading more, start writing more and if you're still struggling with it, then get in contact. We can help you. We're helping hundreds of students every single month and it's going really well. We've got a great team. Just keep your chin up and keep moving forward.

Okay. All right, Amandeep. I'll stop recording there.

[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltpodcast.com