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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

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**Ben:** IELTS Indicator. Hello there, IELTS students. In this tutorial, we are going to give you an overview of the new IELTS Indicator test. It's going to be Daphne and myself. We're going to cover what it is, when and where you can do it, who's it for, how long it takes to get your results back, what exactly does it test, how the test works, and we're going to look at some of the



universities that might accept it or who accepts it more appropriately and basically our own opinion on this.

So, on this tutorial today, we have Daphne. How are you doing, Daphne?

**Daphne:** Hi, everyone. I'm fine thank you, Ben. I hope all is okay with everyone out there too.

**Ben:** Excellent. All right then, let's jump into it. So, Daphne, as we all know, we've got this lovely COVID-19 virus having a wonderful impact on our lives. So, the IELTS IDP British Council decided to launch the IELTS Indicator test. So, could you just give us an overview of what this is?

**Daphne:** Yes, this is really exciting. I'd heard about this and Ben had mentioned it to me before, but I wasn't exactly sure what it was. So, I started doing some research and this is a really, really



good idea. This is honestly I think one of the good really positive things to come out of this awful virus and everybody being at home. So, IELTS Indicator is an online test. It is run by IELTS. It is a total IELTS product, so I think that's really important to stress immediately. It's an IELTS product, online test that you can take at home and it includes all the four skills and you're just doing it at home rather than going to an exam center.

**IT IS AN OFFICIAL IELTS PRODUCT**

**Ben:** I'm just going to emphasize. As Daphne said, it's an IELTS product, so it's official and it doesn't have the same utility as the traditional one. However, it's a good sort of like bridging solution until things get back to normal. Basically, I guess the idea is that we can keep moving



forward with the whole process, the universities and so on and so forth. We're not going to be totally paralyzed by this COVID virus.

I'll just briefly mention that-- well, actually no. I'm going to mention that point later when it's more appropriate. I'm jumping ahead. I'm quite interested in this. So, when and where can these students take this test, Daphne?

### IT IS A COMPUTER - BASED TEST

**Daphne:** Okay, so the idea is that it's a computer test. You can't do a paper-based test, so that's something to take on board. It is computer only and you do it at home. Obviously, you're in lockdown, you can't go out. Even if you're not in lockdown, you may not want to go out and



most of the test centers now as we know are closed. So, this gives you the chance to do your IELTS exam while the centers are closed.

So, it is, as Ben said, it's a stopgap we might say. So, it's an indicator of your results. It's accepted by most universities. It doesn't have the same-- it's not exactly the same in terms of where you can use it. So, you can't use it for immigration, but if you want to study in the UK or study somewhere and start in September, this is your answer.

**Ben:** Absolutely, yes. As Daphne was saying, this is for those who want to study abroad, who want to go to the universities UK, Canada, Australia and just as a side note, I want to talk about-- I'm going a little bit off-topic here, but it's basically a cultural thing that in the East, as far as I know, rules are rules and there are policies and it's quite strict.



However, in the West, and I'm talking from personal experience and from talking to other application experts-- those professionals who prepare you for applying for university-- is that in the West-- this only applies to non-legal rules by the way, but in the West, policies and rules are kind of open to interpretation and to negotiation. Not all of them, but you can still apply.

Like if they say we're only accepting those with a band 6.5 or 7 or 6.5, I would still apply if you're getting a 6. Still apply and the reason is-- and I've done this personally when I was applying for University in Manchester-- is that there are two reasons. One, that the universities are not in the best conditions at the moment i.e. they're probably going to have less students than they did the year before because of this whole COVID thing. It's going to throw their whole finances, their whole operations into a bit of a mess, into a bit of chaos. Exactly.



So, what I'm saying is that you should still apply and just go in there with a kind of flexible mindset and say look hey, I know that I scored slightly lower than you expect, but I am willing to do X Y Z, I'm willing to do a foundation course, I'm willing to do extracurricular activities in English. When I get there, I'm going to enroll in a language school to compensate. So, you're basically making it easier for them to accept you.

I'm saying it because I know that in the East that rules and policies are interpreted as to be set in stone whereas in the West there is some negotiation involved. I'm not saying it's all the time, but we have this culture of-- I'm not saying this for everything, but it's definitely worth a shot. I did this when I was applying to my university in Manchester and I was basically negotiating all the way. I was saying look okay, I know that I didn't get this, but I got this grade for my general studies A levels and so on and so forth. So, it's still worth a shot. Don't throw in the towel if



you're slightly under and especially now because they're in chaos and they need to fill those classrooms. So, let's get back--

**Daphne:** Ben, I think that's actually really, really well said and I know from-- a lot of my students are applying for university at the moment. Some of them are a little bit younger and they are applying for university and this test is absolutely brilliant. Every single lesson in this week, I'm going to be saying to everybody book yourself in. It's an opportunity this. It gives you a chance rather than sitting at home thinking I can't do that, I can't study, I can't do this, being negative. This is it.

You've got the chance now to say to the university hey, I've done my IELTS Indicator. You said this is okay. Here's my piece of paper. I'm coming in September.



**Ben:** Absolutely and just another point there, it keeps you moving forward. It stops you sitting on the couch and throwing in the towel and just saying this is okay. I'll just apply next year. With this, you can just keep yourself moving forward. You've got a new goal to work towards and if you hit that goal, then the rest of the other goals can fall down like dominoes, so to speak, and lo and behold, you wake up and you're in a university in England or in Canada or wherever. You've moved forward while other people will still be on the couch watching Netflix wondering when they can take their official IELTS test. So, don't be that person on the couch.

Okay. Right then, as you said this is only available for a limited time and only some countries are accepting it. I found this was quite weird because I thought if it was an online test boom! Everybody could take it, but apparently, it's not like that, is it?



**Daphne:** I think everyone can take it. I looked through the list of universities and it is a very, very comprehensive list. So, I was mostly looking at UK universities. They've worked really hard at this. They've obviously contacted all these universities on your behalf and they've said okay, what do you want? What do you need from people? Generally, the grades go between 5.5 in some cases to 6.5, occasionally a 7 depending on the uni, but there is a long, long list on that website.

So, on the IELTS Indicator website, you can look up the academic establishment or education place you want to go to, see if they're on that list. It's a long, long list. What they also recommend is that you contact the admissions department and say hey, I've heard of this IELTS Indicator. Are you accepting it? And as Ben said, there is a lot of flexibility at the moment



because these universities want to support you. They're not trying to shut the door. They are trying to open the door.

**Ben:** Exactly and I don't think the doors have ever been as open. Maybe perhaps in the economic recession of 2008 when everything was chaotic then. I would imagine they would have wanted these international students in their universities paying the fees and just keeping business running because at the end of the day, a lot of these are not subsidized. They've got to make their money and international students are usually a very good source for that.

So, just one thing before we move on to how you get the results. We should really emphasize that it's not accepted for economic migration to Canada. That's really important and there's no general test indicator at the moment. There's only academic test. It's only for the academic test.



**Daphne:** Yes. That being said, if you-- and yes, it's academic. That's right because it's going for universities, but it could be that if you think this is the answer for you, just switch from general to academic. Do a bit of practice with us. Do a bit of practice with academic and you may find that actually it's not as difficult or as frightening as you thought it was and you can get the academic. Again, don't say no.

**Ben:** Absolutely. Good point there. Good point. Again, keep your mind open. Keep your options open and I think having this flexibility will help you move forward faster. At the end of the day, that's what we want to be doing. We don't want this obstacle becoming fossilized. We don't want it to stay there and take root. We want to keep moving. Look for different alternatives. Should I be doing academic? Maybe I could go to this university. If we keep moving forward, then we're basically not going to let this COVID thing set us back basically.



**Daphne:** No.

**Ben:** I like that strong emphasis there from Daphne, no. This is not going to stop us. All right. So, what does it exactly test, Daphne?

**Daphne:** Okay. So, it is the same as the IELTS test. That's the other most important thing to stress. When I was researching it, I thought okay, it's an indicator. Does that mean it's easier? Is it less valid? For a test to work, it has to be valid. It has to be a real test and this is exactly the same as the normal IELTS test, okay? So, listening 30 minutes, 40 questions; reading 60 minutes, 40 questions; writing 60 minutes, two tasks as you know.

Those all happen in one hit at home. You cannot go and have a coffee break, sorry. You have to stay at that computer for that time which is the same as it would be in the exam. The speaking is with a real IELTS examiner over Zoom video call. So, again, it is totally valid. You've got your



test with a speaker-- with an examiner, sorry. There's no compromise. This is real. Still same thing; 11-14 minutes and that is either a few days before or a few days after your actual test.

**Ben:** Excellent point. So, three points I want to mention. With the reading and listening, you really want to get familiar with doing it on a computer because it is a new challenge and I know that a lot of students struggle with having to type and listen at the same time and they don't have the luxury of a piece of paper in front of them.

It really is a question of learning a new exam skill. It's not that much related to a language skill. This is a new exam skill that you'll have to develop basically, get familiar with it on how to coordinate writing down, listening because you don't have that luxury. I'm not so sure if you could write down with a pen and paper as you're doing it. I very much doubt, but we can talk about that in a second.



The other thing I wanted to mention is it will be your responsibility to make sure you've got a solid internet connection. So, you want to clear off the whole family. If your little brother is downloading some torrents or if your older sister is streaming some programs or your dad is streaming some sports, you want to clear them all off. Get them out of-- actually, you don't want to get them out of the house in the times of COVID, but you can at least ask them to stop using the internet because you want that full bandwidth.

You don't want to be with a choppy connection while you're doing this test because there's money on the line, there is your test on the line, there is your future there. So, you really want to get it set up as best as possible and just basically increase the chances of your success.

The other final thing I want to mention is with regards to the speaking; speaking on the phone. I know this from personal experience and Daphne probably knows this as well from speaking



French, but speaking a foreign language-- in your case, it will be English-- but speaking a foreign language on the phone is not the same as speaking to somebody face-to-face.

Even if it's a video call, you do not have the luxury of interpreting all the non-audio clues and what that means is if you're in an exam face-to-face with the examiner, you could probably see little changes in their facial expressions that might indicate carry on, that might indicate thank you, that might indicate a whole range of different things. It's going to be a challenge to interpret those when it's just a Zoom call, which is the software you need to do for the speaking.

So, it's your responsibility to get used to one, speaking with somebody on the phone because they're not going to sound as rich obviously as face-to-face and second, you're not going to have the luxury of the entire range of non-verbal clues. So, this is another exam skill and I would recommend making phone calls.



I've said in previous tutorials just go to the yellow pages, ring up some butchers, ring up some services, ring up some insurance sales agents in the UK and just have a chat with them. You could do that and just develop it because they will not be adapting to your level of English. They will just speak at native English speed.

**Daphne:** I agree. You need to get confident on that, but I think all is really good is because it's-- if you're not used to Zoom software, if you're not used to video calls, get practicing now. As Ben said, just contact anybody. Obviously, you can't see people's faces, sometimes there is a little bit of a delay in the speaking and then you actually hearing it and that can be a little bit disconcerting. It can make you feel a bit uncomfortable.



So, make sure you feel comfortable doing those calls, but at least you can see them. So, at least you know if they're smiling then that will make you feel more relaxed. You need a web camera, obviously.

**Ben:** Yes, and I think if you've got a really terrible one or if your technology is pretty slow or pretty terrible, I would strongly recommend maybe borrowing somebody's decent computer because you really don't want that to be a factor like oh, is my laptop going to crash in this call? You want to be going there as we said like the best opportunity. You want to stack the deck in your favor, so to speak. All right. So, how does this test work?

**Daphne:** Okay. We were just going back-- I'm going to back a tiny bit, Ben. The good bit is you get your results in seven days.



**Ben:** Wow!

**Daphne:** So, that is fantastic. So, you get your results. The results are super quick. They are digitally given to you over the email or something within seven days. So, that is really good. So, in terms of making decisions about your future because obviously the admissions process for these universities especially if you want to go in September, the admissions process is well on the way now. So, you can say to the uni okay, I'm taking this test. I'll give you the results in a week. That's amazing I think.

**Ben:** Yes, I just want to emphasize what I was saying before like the ball is in your court. The application process is open and you could interpret this is sort of like okay, this is a normal academic year. Maybe my chances are slim, but because of all the chaos, this is a good opportunity to actually give it a shot and to apply. Amongst all these chaos, some students will



just defer it for a year so the classes are going to be slightly empty. Take this opportunity. If you're thinking about it and you've been umming and aching about it, take this opportunity. Jump in. Get that application. Get that test done and move forward.

**Daphne:** Yes. Okay, so how does it work, you said. Right. So, the most important thing is that you are safe and you are at home and for me, that is so reassuring. You don't have to stress about when is my test center going to be open and even when I get there, will I be okay? You're at home and Ben is right. Get the kids out the way. Get the family out the way, but all you need is the desktop or computer or a laptop with a good internet connection and as Ben said, you don't want to be worrying about a bad internet connection.

For the time you download a software called SEB which is a safe exams browser and that will block you going on any other Google or anything else during that exam time. This is important.



**Ben:** Yes, I was really interested in this. If you're on your iPhone I thought you'd do the test on your iPhone, but if you're on your iPad or on your laptop it freezes your computer. It stops you switching. So, the only thing you can do is what is in front of you. So, this is like-- yes, yes and they're taking this serious. This is one of-- I imagine this is one of the assurances IELTS IDP British Council gave to the universities. They said look hey, we're freezing their computers while they are doing the tests and we're going to make sure that we are giving you non-cheating applicants, pure--

**Daphne:** The universities in the UK are using this already because the final year students can't take their exams obviously in a normal exam hall where they would take them. So, all the students have had this software. They've done the exams at home and everyone says don't even



try. Don't even waste your time trying to go onto Google because you can't and then you're just wasting those precious minutes you've got when you should be writing your Task 2.

**Ben:** Absolutely. Good point. Final point-- no, we've got a few more points; about three more. So, will my university accept this indicator test?

**Daphne:** Really good question. Okay, so it's important to remember the indicator does not replace an in-person IELTS at the test center and it is not accepted by every organization. So, check before you book. That is the most important thing to say, but on this website as I said, there's a very good guide as to who will accept it and I think the band is pretty generous. I think, as Ben said, I think they're being pretty friendly on this one and the results goes straight to the university. That's also quite good actually.



The British Councils have connected to all these universities and so the result will go to you and to them. So, you don't need to worry about how do I contact them? How will they know? Obviously, if you're going to retake, if you don't like your results when you want to retake, then you could contact them and say hey, actually I know I can do better. I'm going to retake. It's pretty neat and yes, so there's a very, very strong chance that your university will be on that list and they will accept this indicator results.

**Ben:** Yes, and as a side note, if your university is not on that list or your college, send them an email and just ask will you accept the IELTS Indicator? There may have been some mix-up. They might not have gotten round to it. They may be in the process of just assessing it and implementing the new systems. Just ask them anyway. It's worth a shot.



These things are not-- as I said earlier, there's a lot of chaos at the moment and it's a good opportunity for you to just sort of interpret the rules sort of like with a little bit of flexibility due to these chaos that's going on. So, send your institute an email anyway and just say hey, would you accept these IELTS Indicator results if you cannot see your university on the list. All right. So, moving on to the cost.

**Daphne:** More good news here. The cost of the indicator is \$149 compared to around \$358. I know prices vary where you are for the normal IELTS. This is US dollars. So, it is clearly cheaper and also you don't have to travel. So, I know some people have to travel a long way to take this test. They might have to have a hotel as well. So, doing this at home, \$149, getting the results in a week; there's lots and lots of good things here.

**Ben:** I really think this corona thing has really just brought the future forward. Do you know?



**Daphne:** Yes.

**Ben:** Like doing the courses online. The universities doing the courses online, the tests going online. It wouldn't surprise me if this becomes the norm going forward. We've already got IELTS computer. I think eventually we'll probably have IELTS computer online and they will have learnt a lot from this and they'll probably iron out all the creases and then more than likely I imagine I hope as well they roll this out and implement equivalency with the official gold standard IELTS test.

Anyway, so that's enough of me hypothesizing. Let's move on to do you think this is worth as much as the gold standard one we just mentioned?

**Daphne:** Well, absolutely and this is one of the big things that-- the name indicator to me suggests maybe it's not the same, but looking through the website really carefully, it is absolutely



the same. It is a genuine IELTS product. I think it's called indicator because it's giving you an idea of your results and obviously if you got a band 6 in your writing and if you thought I really can get a 7.5 you might take the time, get involved in an online course like ours, get your writing amazing and then try again.

But in terms of is it a real product? Absolutely. Is it worth as much as the ordinary IELTS now at the moment? Absolutely. It's recognized by universities. It's done to support you. The questions are the same and the examiners are the same-- and the examiners marking it are the same. So, it is valid. Yes.

**Ben:** And just one last thing. I was thinking about it now. You take the IELTS indicator test. You get into the university and you're working through each semester. Nobody is going to come



up and say hey, you only did an IELTS Indicator to get into this course. Go and now take the official IELTS.

**Daphne:** Of course not, exactly.

**Ben:** Yes. Maybe you could mention this in your negotiation process. Hey look, after the first term when things get back to normal (or my English is improved), I'll go back and do the official test, but this is a good chance now the door is open and as we were saying, the door is opened wider than normal. There is more flexibility in who they are accepting because of this whole pandemic and you get the opportunity to take this cheaper test with the luxury by taking it at home as well. So, this really is sort of like an opportunity to move forward and also--



**Daphne:** And much less stressful, Ben, as well don't you think to be able to do it at home rather than to have to go to a center?

**Ben:** Absolutely, yes. That's a good point. I never thought about that and also, maybe we should do another tutorial about this. But you don't want to be sat on the couch with the laptop or on a beanbag doing this test. You want to be sat down in your desk in as a professional environment as you can master, but still you're going to have this familiarity of you're doing it at home in a familiar location. So, that's going to help you considerably as well to help you remove these nerves.

And also, if you've been writing your exam-- your Task 2s and your Task 1s on the computer-- this is what we encourage for our online course. We don't want to see the handwritten ones because it just takes forever and a lot of people have chicken scratch and it just takes too long.



**Daphne:** Chicken scratch-- sorry. What's that?

**Ben:** Chicken scratch is a horrendously bad handwriting.

**Daphne:** I've never heard that expression before.

**Ben:** I remember you once said that you've got a terrible handwriting which I was quite surprised at.

**Daphne:** Mine used to be good-- well, never that good, but it used to be legible maybe, but nowadays we don't write much, do we? Generally, we type and I'm with you, Ben. I think the computer-based tests are really good. Also one other thing actually because you're doing it at home, you can read aloud. You know how some people quite like reading aloud? In an exam center you can't read aloud because there are other people near you, but if you're at home and



you're doing the reading or you need to read the questions aloud maybe just to kind of focus yourself, you can do that at home. That's another bonus I think.

**Ben:** Yes. Good point there. Good point. I think that's about-- With our online course, we insist you write all your essays on the computer and send them to us and this will help you when you're doing something like the IELTS computer-based or the IELTS Indicator because you'll have got into that familiarity of typing your essays out rather than hand writing.

So, just bear that in mind. If you are considering an online course and you do think you're going to be doing the computer-based or the IELTS Indicator, then an online course where you have the opportunity to send them in typed up is probably going to help you. It's going to get you more familiar with the whole process. That just brings us to the final point that if you are-- well



no. You probably are preparing for the exam. I just want to remind you that you can send us your essays. We'd love to give you that feedback and help you improve faster.

We've also got the official apps where you can listen to the podcast and read along with the transcript. Also, when you sign up for the email list, we send you offers and we send you new material pretty much daily. So, there are lots of benefits there from signing up and also getting feedback on your work.

**Daphne:** I've got two more things, Ben, just to say it quickly.

**Ben:** Okay.

**Daphne:** If you want to find out more, there is a website which is the British Council official website [ieltsindicator.com](http://ieltsindicator.com). You can book there. There's a little very short video just telling you a



little bit more about it. So, [ieltsindicator.com](https://ieltsindicator.com) and the other thing is act quickly. We do not know how long this is going to be around for. So, I strongly suggest get involved quickly.

**Ben:** That's a great tip. That's a great tip there. As we're saying, we don't know how long this door is going to be open as wide as it is. We don't know how long the IELTS Indicator is going to be available. So, move fast, move forward, get that feedback, get booking the test, and you're away. Okay. I think that's everything. So, good luck with your exam and goodbye from myself and Daphne.

**Daphne:** Good luck everyone. Keep going.

[Music]

**Female voice:** Thanks for listening to [ieltspodcast.com](https://ieltspodcast.com)

