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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:** What are the 10 types of questions on the IELTS reading test? Hello, there. My name is Ben Worthington and in this tutorial, we will look at those 10 questions and we're also going to check out some of the preparation techniques and some of the skills you'll need and then we'll look at the different types of reading.

So, as you know, my name is Ben Worthington. I've been doing these IELTS podcasts for quite a while. I started out because I was an English teacher in Spain and I was figuring out how to



prepare students for the IELTS test and I figured one of the best ways I could prepare these students was asking the experts at the time.

So, I would find reading experts, linguistics experts, language experts, any expert I could find basically and I would be interviewing them and then testing what worked. I'd test what was helping the students, what was pulling the students down, throwing some advice out, improving some advice, using some advice in the course and then that's eventually how I made the online course that we've got at the moment which covers the reading test, the academic test, the general test, and the speaking test.

We've got a special one for the speaking; Speaking Confidence and all of that advice just came from preparing students and asking experts because when I started out I was really confused. I didn't know what the IELTS was and I really didn't know what the students needed. Eventually, though through lots of trials, testing, and processes and experience with students and experience



with experts, we got there and we found such a strong course that we could offer the guarantee on it and that's the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free.

Right. Let's jump into the 10 types of questions. When you do the reading test, you'll find multiple choice questions, information, identification questions, information matching, head matching, sentence completion, summary completion, features matching, matching sentence endings, short answer questions, and matching information. It's quite a lot there. Let's go through each one quite briefly and then we will look at preparation strategies and how to improve your score.

So, with the multiple choice questions, you're going to have to pick the correct answer from the choices and these choices are labeled a b c d e f and the main goal with this type of question is to test your ability at extracting and understanding detailed specific information. Now, as I'll mention later on, a good extensive vocabulary is essential. If you know the synonyms of



different words, then you'll be aware of different sentences that are expressing the same thing, but with different words.

Now, information identification questions. This is where you-- it's more commonly known as yes/ no/ not given. With these, you have to identify whether it's true, false, or not given. These really test your ability to sort of like deduce what is being said from the context and just as a side note here, sometimes you might think you have found your answer only to find that that piece of information is then contradicted later in the paragraph or even later further down in the article. So, just be aware that contradictions can happen. So, this is why it's a good strategy just to read everything before you start diving in and giving your answers.

Information matching: this is quite straight forward and this is where you have to clearly understand the text, understand every paragraph, and obviously the information that it contains, but here you'll be identifying specific information and placing it where it needs to fit.



Head matching: now these require you to pick a heading from the given choices and place it for each of the paragraphs. Again, very similar skill set is required. Do you understand the text completely? Have you found the most accurate heading?

Now, just as a side note, the good thing about IELTS reading test is because it's quite a broad skill reading comprehension, you can practice by using other reading comprehension tests such as the Cambridge First. So, if you've exhausted a lot of the online reading tests around, then you can still improve your skills by looking at other English language tests. And just one final side note on that, if you go to [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com), you can find lots of practice papers there.

Sentence completion: this is quite self-explanatory. You just complete a sentence and with this one, you basically need to map the incomplete text to a particular location in the text for you to find the correct answer.



Now, the next one is summary completion and with this, a summary part of the text is given to you and then you have to complete it by picking words from the text with a given maximum number of words to complete it. So, I think this would be best illustrated with an example. Unfortunately, I don't have one here at the moment, but we will go into this in more detail in another podcast coming up soon.

Features matching: now these are the types of questions where you have to find, again, specific information about specific features and then match it. So, you could find-- for example, you could find different people who discovered different things at different times. Now, you are required to match who discovered what at what time.

So, this can be-- I think a while back actually we did a tutorial all about this and we jumped right into it and Daphne and I we were just looking at it-- we were just glancing and it does take a high degree of concentration which is a skill Vinod mentioned in an earlier podcast about how he developed his concentration skills by increasing his meditation, doing breathing exercises, and



yoga. So, this would be one of the skill sets that probably you wouldn't think would be required, but after doing a few practice tests, you quickly find that it is necessary.

Eighth type: matching sentence endings. This is quite simple. You get part of a sentence from the line of text and then what you need to do is locate where it's taken from and then complete the sentence and there you have it and it's quite straightforward. A good sound knowledge of grammar can almost sometimes shortcut your way here.

For example, I don't know if you've got the subject and the verb in the first part of the sentence-- sorry. If you've got the subject in the first part of the sentence-- subject and verb in the first part, then obviously you'll be looking for the object later on for the second part.

Short answer questions: now these ones you do have to be quite careful about and this is more about finding information such as facts and dates and numbers. So, here you will need to check the number of words because you're limited and it will say this on the question paper.



And the final one is matching information. This is quite straightforward. Again, it's easier said than done because you will have to overcome some of the obstacles such as the contradictions and some of the tricks and turns that they may be placing in the paper.

So, just to summarize, we've got matching information, short answer questions, matching sentence endings, features matching, summary completion, sentence completion, head matching, information matching, information identification questions otherwise known as yes/ no or was it true, false, not given, and multiple choice questions.

Now, how do you prepare? Well, obviously you want to be reading. Now, depending on how soon your exam is will obviously dictate your strategy. For example, if you've got your exam next week, I would strongly recommend you do practice papers. Now, if you've got your exam coming up in a few months or even six months' time, then I would try and develop the habit of constantly reading.



Now, I'm doing this personally at the moment with my Spanish. As you know, I used to live in Spain and now I don't and I'm worried about losing my Spanish. So, I'm reading now a lot in Spanish. I did try reading some complex Russian novels which I've read before in English you know like *War and Peace*, *Master Margarita*, but they were just too complicated for me to read in Spanish. So, I brought it down a level and I'm reading *Harry Potter* and this one's much easier. It's written in a much less complex fashion. There's less information I have to hold, but it's also enjoyable. It's quite funny and it just keeps me going.

And the reason why I'm saying I'm reading *Harry Potter* is because if you can find something that you enjoy, then it's much easier to develop that habit and that's where the long-term improvement will come.

Now, we all know that we should be skimming and scanning and to skim, what you do you just-- you're basically like reading through the text, but you're not going in a word-by-word fashion.



What I'd strongly recommend here is sort of like reading groups of words at the same time, so like picking up three words and then moving on to the next three words.

Be careful though when you are practicing this skill because it's easy to speed read as I just mentioned there. It's easy to do the speed reading technique and not retain any of the information. So, just be very careful here. You want to be skimming through, again, three words at a time, bouncing in those three word clumps or clusters to the next three words, to the next three words, to the next three words. You might want to practice this skill in your own language and then try and transfer it to English.

Now, scanning is when you're going even faster, but you're keeping your eyes open for a specific word or phrase. You have to be careful here because you also want to be looking out for the synonyms or the meaning. So, just be careful and as I said before, there's a few different techniques for doing this. Some students prefer to read the whole text and then look at the



questions. Other students prefer to read the questions and then read the whole text. Other students prefer to read a question then look for the answer then read another question.

And what is the right answer? Well, you need to practice. You need to practice and find out which one works best for you. Another technique is to look for the keywords; quite similar to scanning, but be careful here. Be careful because you can trip yourself up because if you're just looking for those specific keywords, you may lose some of the information around those keywords. You might learn that that keyword was part of a contradiction. So, just be careful here.

Now, time management again comes down to the strategies that I mentioned before; reading the questions first then doing the text and you need to find out which strategy not only brings you the most points but also which one you can do in 60 minutes.



Now, another preparation tip here is first, just to maybe give yourself an hour and a half to do a reading test and get comfortable with the strategy, get comfortable with the format, and then slowly start bringing it down to 60 minutes. I used to work with one tutor who would only give the students 45 minutes to do these reading tests and his logic was well, if they can do them in 45 minutes then 60 minutes is going to be luxury. And I wasn't too keen on that strategy, but again, you might want to test it. It could be useful for you.

So, while you're doing your reading test, don't just blindly attack them one after the other going at it like it's some kind of production line job. You want to be consciously aware of which strategy is going to be working for you.

Now, I'll just mention the speed reading technique again because this is a different type of reading. When we're reading, for example, a newspaper article or we're just reading for the luxury of reading, we're probably going to go at a slower pace. We're going to go from word to



word to word taking in one word at a time and this way, you're probably going to maximize your comprehension, but it is not really practical for the IELTS exam.

Having said that, you do need to read the whole text here in the test paper. This is self-explanatory. Basically, just to check for the contradictions, just to check maybe the nuance of the sentences, maybe the paragraphs and just pick up all the information there. And how do you read the whole text? Well, you speed read through it. You do three words at a time and you jump and you jump and you jump. Once you get better, maybe you can start extending this to five words or even to a whole line. I know that's possible and there's a course in Udemy about speed reading. However, it does take a lot of practice to get up to the ability that's promised in the course. So, just bear that in mind.

I think personally the quickest most effective way is just to start with three words at a time and do those comprehension tests. Also, I'd strongly recommend you do the IELTS on computer simulation test at [ielts.org](https://ielts.org) or just go to Google and put IELTS simulation or IELTS practice test,



[ielts.org](https://ielts.org) on computer and there you can get used to the software that's used and it's kind of funny because I know a lot of students can improve their score by doing IELTS writing on computer, but sometimes the listening or the reading is sacrificed.

They can get higher scores doing the pen and paper version and this is because they're more used to it. They are more used to the format and especially with the listening. From my understanding, it's easier to coordinate pen and paper writing down answer and making notes and listening than it is with the computer version where you're having to type. And I guess it's probably because you've got more mobility over the exam paper. You can move it around and everything like that and also, with the listening and the reading you are restricted with what's on the screen.

So, this is why it's very important to get used to doing these practice tests on computer. As far as I know, I think there's only one available at the moment. So, this is what I was saying before as well that if you can do some-- if you are going to do your test on a computer, then get used to the structure, but also get used to doing the other reading tests as well because this kind of like



navigation around the exam paper is going to-- there's improved ability around the exam paper. On the computer is going to help you when you do your official test on the computer.

Now, then if you are stuck on a question, perhaps write it down or write down the number. Circle it if you're on the pen and paper and then come back to it later. You don't want to get stuck. You can also get the total number of questions divided by 60 and this will help you as well because then you've got a rough idea on approximately how much time you want to be allocating to each question, but be careful. As we know, the exam gets progressively more difficult.

And this goes back to the strategies we were talking about before that some students they leave the last few questions because they're incredibly difficult and these are for the band 8 or band 9 students and when I mean leave, I mean they don't leave them unanswered, but they dedicate less time to them and dedicate more time to the middle and the penultimate parts of the test because this is where if they're going for a 7 they don't really need to spend as much time on the end ones which are harder, which are going to require more time and you'll get the same amount of points



there. So, just remember what I said before test different strategies. Test which strategy brings you closest to your target band score.

Now, final points here. Just going back to general reading here. We need to be aware that sometimes there is reading for-- well, there's active reading and there's casual reading. So, when we're active reading, we're probably looking for information. We're probably marking down on the exam paper or underlining or in the book or whatever underlining key information and this is why doing practice tests is essential because you'll get used to some of the question types.

You'll get used to the writing style of the examiners. You'll get used to how they organize the information and if you're actively reading, you can start to spot some of those. Like if you know that an answer-- if you're familiar with how a question is going to be set up or how an answer is delivered, the next time you do an exam paper, you can circle it. You can underline it and it just becomes much easier.



Now, we do have a reading course available at [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com). However, my main advice here is doing practice tests and just testing which strategy gives you the best-- gives you the closest score to the one you need and I'm saying this because after interviewing so many successful students, all of them especially the band 8s and the 8.5s and the band 9s they were doing like a practice test a day. They were just getting so familiar building this exam skill.

So, I honestly believe it's better doing practice tests than it is on figuring out reading tips or figuring out different strategies for the exam. Just maybe do a little bit of research, but you want to be focusing most of your efforts and time in actually doing reading papers and improving your reading comprehension.

So, that's about it for me today. If you are still struggling with the IELTS, with the writing especially or the speaking, then please get in contact. It's [ben@ieltspodcast](mailto:ben@ieltspodcast) and we've recently updated the Sentence Guide Course. We've got more skills in there about developing study habits



which I think is so important at the moment especially because there are so many students studying from home because of lockdown.

So, you need to get these skills on how to organize your time, how to make every minute count and the course now covers all of those because at first, we just focused on writing structures, how to get ideas, how to select information, and the phrases you need for General Task 1 and all of this, but the new course comes with all these study skills and tools that'll help you get the most out of your study session.

That's it from me today. I hope you enjoyed this. If you've got any suggestions or if you're just struggling with IELTS, then get in contact. We always reply and we can help you. We're helping students every single day. We're correcting essays, giving essay feedback, giving speaking feedback with students who send in files of example cue cards. It's going really well and yes. You're not alone with this. You've got us to help you. So, have a great day and keep on moving forward. All the best.



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