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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:** Hello there IELTS students. In this tutorial, we are looking at IELTS preparation tips. I'm going to give you 10 of my best pieces of advice, my best 10 tips. These are from working with students day in day out correcting essays, so I know what mistakes have been made and how to remedy them, how to correct them, but also my interviews with students who have had success and who have tried out different strategies and they come back and say okay, Ben this really worked for me. This didn't work. And I've put it all together in one tutorial.



We're going to first sort of like look at more general study ones, but later in the recording from about-- well, actually tip no.2 and no. 4 are very, very specific, but I want to first kind of like look at some general ones which will have an impact.

So, the first one is identify when you are at your most productive. So, some students and myself included I work best in the morning, but my partner she is a night owl and she works best at the night-- in the evening and each person is different. Well, with some people, they don't really-- they can work at any time, but generally, most of the population either falls into early birds or night owls.

Find out which one you are then allocate that time. Find a space where there are no distractions. Put your phone in flight mode and pedal to the metal as we say or as they say in the U.S. which basically means just focus. I find setting a timer and just sitting down and doing 50-minute blocks works the best.



Now, two more things and then we're going to go specifically into IELTS, but unless we get these other two things under control, then it doesn't really matter what the tip is because you've got to get the right environment. Now, the next tip I want to share with you is get a routine and there's so much information about this.

I think James Clear is the best authority about being productive with your time. If you really struggle, have a look at-- just google James Clear the power of habit-- no, it's not the power of habit. It's something like deep work-- James Clear anyway and he talks about getting a routine, establishing a habit, and just start small. Maybe write out one paragraph. That's it. And then in your next study session, write out two paragraphs, but first establish the routine.

He talks about a reader of his site that really wanted to start going to the gym for the New Year and how did he start doing it? He said okay, the first thing I'm just going to commit and promise to put my trainers on and walk up to the gym. That's all. I'm going to break it down into the



smallest components because those are the easiest to do and then once I've got to the gym, I'll decide. Sometimes I'll walk back, but I've completed the smallest part and that's all I need to do.

Once I've mastered that part then I'll start going into the gym and maybe I'll just get changed and then come back out. Maybe I'll just do five minutes and then come back out, but it's important just to get the smallest bits down-- get them nailed and then start setting bigger goals like an hour at the gym every day.

So, in our case like I said a few seconds ago, we can just write out one paragraph. We can just write out one essay. We're just going to copy out one band 9 essay. Pen and paper just copy it out. Look, cover, write. So, we look at it, we cover it up, and we write it out. We're going to just copy one out; one every single day. That's it.

Now, of course it depends. If you've got your test coming up in 10 days, then it's not the time to start trying to establish a habit. It's do or die basically. In that situation, I would recommend you



make a schedule and you write down specifically what you're going to do and as I said in a few podcasts ago, after you've finished your session write a debrief note. So, you put a note to yourself.

My debriefs are something like Ben, we've finished this article. Next, we need to find sources for the next article. So, the next time I come to this piece of work, I can pick up exactly where I left off and I don't need to go scrambling around looking for what to do and losing time. I would recommend you do the same when you are preparing. So, in your case, it might be okay, listening test went fabulous except for multiple choice. Next session just practice multiple choice questions which brings me on to the next point which is find your weaknesses and focus on those.

You do not have to do a whole listening test every single day. Find out where on the listening test you're losing points and this applies also to your writing and to your speaking and obviously your reading. With the reading and listening-- the receptive skills-- this is much easier to identify



your weaknesses because you've got the answers at the back and you're going to basically get instant feedback whereas with the speaking and the writing, these are your productive skills and you really-- if you're serious about improving-- you really want to get professional feedback.

Getting feedback from a native speaker is better than nothing. Getting feedback from somebody who's highly capable in English language is better than nothing, but if you really truly want to excel and you really want to improve the fastest way possible-- and I know this from years of experience-- the fastest way possible is to find an expert who can give you the feedback. We do this at IELTS Podcast. I'm correcting essays day in day out. Send your essays to us. We'll look over it.

We'll say something like okay Vinod, your paragraphs they've got great vocabulary, but you're really lacking cohesion or you need to improve your ideas or you need to organize your thoughts a little bit more coherently. Have a look at module 4 where we give you a straightforward



strategy to follow. So, just to summarize, get feedback. You're going to improve much, much faster.

The next one. Write down your objectives. So, this is closely related to the debriefs that I was mentioning before. So, not only do you want to set out what you want to-- sorry-- not only do you want to debrief each study session so you can pick up exactly where you left off but you want to set kind of like goals for the day or even goals for the week.

Again, if you've got your exam coming up in 10 days, then the best thing you can do is just work on your weaknesses, but if you've got your exam coming up in three months, then it's really advisable to get a study planner in place. Break it down. I get emails all the time saying I need help with the IELTS and I'm like I can't do anything with that. What do you want me to do with that email?



So, I have to email back and I'm like okay, can you tell me specifically what you need and they're like oh, I need a band 7. Again, I can't do anything with that. Tell me where you're struggling with and they're like oh, I've got problems with the reading or I've got problems with the writing. Okay. Again, how can I help you if you just say you've got problems with the writing?

So, what you want to be doing is basically be really specific with your objectives. So, you really need to get sort of like roll your sleeves up as we say in England-- roll your sleeves up, dig in, and get some feedback or start doing some practice tests and find out where your weak points are and then set that up as your objective and break it down.

So, if you are only getting 30 or if you're only getting 20 out of 40 on the listening test then obviously you've got to improve your listening skills over the next three months. So, break it down. Week 1 I'm only going to work on multiple choice questions. Week 2 I'm only going to



work on listening labeling diagrams. Break it down, focus and it becomes much easier to master each section and each component once it's broken down.

Also as I said when you are getting help, when you are getting feedback, this accelerates the process much-- you can just move along a lot faster especially if you're following an online course where it's all structured. So, you're basically working module 1 week 1-- modules 1, 2, and 3 for week 1, modules 4, 5, and 6 for week 2 and just having that structure will make you a lot more productive.

Now, the next point is to keep track of your results and improvement. Now, that sounds relatively straightforward and on its own I think personally it's rather vague. So, how can you keep track of your results and your improvement? Well, one thing we do and I strongly recommend you do this when you're writing your essays or if you're getting feedback, I strongly recommend you do this as well so that when you get your feedback, make a list of all the



mistakes that you made. Make a list of all the mistakes your teacher pointed out and then in the next essay you write check your essays for those mistakes, okay?

Also, if your teacher is only pointing out the things you did incorrectly, then fire that teacher because it's tough preparing for IELTS and you do not want a teacher who's just bringing you down and saying this is rubbish. That's is wrong. This is wrong and this is wrong. You also want a teacher who is going to be saying this is good. This is great. This needs improvement. Your vocabulary here is excellent. Your paragraph structure needs improving here.

Why do you want a tutor like that? Because preparing for IELTS is tough and if you've only got a tutor who's going to be focusing on the negative, it makes it much harder to progress, but most importantly if you're getting praised and if your good work is getting recognized, you are 10 times more likely to repeat it and to do it again.



This is exactly why when you get your essay corrected by us at IELTS Podcast we're going to be pointing out the good things just as much as the bad things as well because we know preparing for IELTS is tough. It's tough. You've got your job. You've got your pressure-- you've got the pressure of your family life. You've got the pressure of going to university. You've got all these things going on and the last thing you want to be doing in some cases is working through an IELTS reading test, for example.

Maybe not so much now with lockdown. Ideally, you're super pumped and you're motivated to do that either way. Even if you're super motivated, having a tutor who only focuses on the negative can be a real energy drain. You want a positive powerful tutor who's going to keep your motivation and put that confidence inside you and just keep you moving forward and help you capitalize on the momentum that you've got with your IELTS preparation.

Now, another obvious piece of advice is just to get familiar with the test. Don't just do practice test after practice test. As I've said in previous tutorials, try looking at the answers first and then



do the questions. Get familiar with the structure. Get familiar with the question types. Get familiar with the strategies the examiners use; the old contradiction trick in the listening. Get familiar with all of this and especially for the writing because with the writing there's probably about five Writing Task 2 questions; problem-solution, discussion and opinion, and all that.

You want to get familiar with writing each type of essay for each type of question because once you've got the familiarity with it, you no longer have to-- once you get familiar with it--sorry-- you no longer have to use up mental energy in figuring out what to do because it just becomes automatic. You're like okay, problem-solution. Easy peasy lemon squeezy as we used to say, but this is what a lot of students say.

Once they know the structure, once they know the formula as past students have said, they've just followed the Sentence Guide Structure, for example. They've done it so many times it becomes muscle memory. Now, they only have to focus on the content. They only have to focus on the language. The structure, the organization of ideas, the generation of ideas is all taken care



of. It's just a matter of dropping those ideas into the Sentence Guide, into the structure that they've learned on our online course and this familiarity just makes it so much easier.

I've heard stories actually of students who followed the structure and they've got like an extra 10 minutes left in the exam. So, what do you do with those 10 minutes? The smart cookies know exactly what to do with those extra 10 minutes left over. You review your work for mistakes and the really smart cookies don't just look for general mistakes. They look for mistakes they made previously as I said before.

Now, a final super point that I also got from James Clear-- this is beautiful point because I think we all suffer from this and especially IELTS students and especially with all the information available online. When you are preparing for the IELTS, it's important to put pen to paper. I know a lot of students get frustrated, get caught up, get stuck, and get confused because they're watching different tutorials. They're watching my tutorials. They might be going to other sites



and watching how Ryan writes an essay, for example and then sending in Ryan's style essay to my correction service and the student really gets confused.

So, what I want to say is that choose kind of like one school and work with that school, but most importantly, do not get caught in analysis paralysis. I get emails all the time saying so-and-so says I should do a five-paragraph essay. So-and-so says I should do a four-paragraph essay and the answer is each tutor is going to have their own way of teaching. They're going to have their own strategies that they've tested out and the same goes for me.

And the important thing is just not to go research and research and research and research and watching tutorials and reading blog posts. The important thing is to actually take action and start writing the essay and then getting feedback and finally, just choose one school. Just choose one tutor and go with what they say and not only will you minimize the amount of research you need to do, you're also going to minimize the amount of confusion and finally most importantly,



you're going to be spending more of your time in the action stage rather than the research or activity stage and that's where the learning really happens.

The learning really happens when you're speaking the language or when you're writing the language and getting feedback. It's not when you're reading blog posts or watching YouTube tutorials. So, find your tutor. Stick with them and follow what they say.

That's it from me today. I forgot to introduce myself. So, as you probably know, my name is Ben and I'm-- it seems weird doing it at the end-- but I'm from the UK. I haven't lived there though for about 15 years and this is why I speak slightly slower. I left Manchester and went to Spain and in Spain, I started teaching English and I eventually specialized in getting results for IELTS students because week after week after week I was just getting more and more students all wanting preparation for the IELTS exam.



And yes, I started interviewing experts and I still do interview experts on pronunciation, on language learning, on academic writing, and I initially started this because I wanted to find out how to teach the IELTS and this was like years ago and I took the knowledge from these experts, I applied it in my own online course with my own students and I threw out what didn't work.

I kept what did work and this is why we've been able now to offer the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free IELTS course. We're so confident we can get you to a 7. If we don't, we refund you your money. So, it's zero risk. So, have a look at that at [ieltspodcast.com/online-ielts-course](https://ieltspodcast.com/online-ielts-course). Online IELTS course. Anyway at IELTS Podcast you'll be able to see it there.

And also, we offer an essay correction service and for listeners of this podcast and for those who subscribe to our newsletter, you can get it at an exceptionally attractive rate. So, I strongly recommend you do that and also just one last thing I just remembered. When you join the course, if you join in December, we're going to extend your access. Instead of 90 days, you're going to get the whole year. So, it's probably a very good time to join us right now. You can buy the



course and you've got all year to use it. Normally it's just 90 days, but if you buy now you've got all year. So, take advantage of that. That's only for the month of December.

My name is Ben. Thank you very much and remember get in contact if you're struggling. [ben@ieltspodcast.com](mailto:ben@ieltspodcast.com). Most importantly, remember you can do this. You've got the strength. You've learned your own language. There's no reason why you can't learn English. There's no reason why you can't pass this test and go and work in the UK, go work in Australia, get your PR in Canada, become a nurse in the United States.

Every week we're getting students who pass. Every week we're getting thank you emails and I want you to be one of those students as well. I want you to have the success that they're having and just basically move forward in life. End this frustration. Okay. Thank you very much for listening. Have a great day and keep on improving.

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