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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 episode, we are talking with Demi from Nigeria who scored some exceptional IELTS results-- some exceptional IELTS scores and in this recording he's going to share how he did it. So, how are you, Demi?

**Demi:** Hello, Ben. I'm very well, thank you.



**Ben:** Excellent. Okay. Before we jump into your IELTS secrets and your success, could you share with us your situation? Why do you need to take IELTS?

**Demi:** Okay. So, I'm a medical doctor by profession. I finished from Babcock University in Ogun State, Nigeria and I have plans to travel to the UK to practice medicine. In order to do that, I have to take the UK medical licensing examination and in order to register for their examination I need to have a proof of English language proficiency. So, that's why I took IELTS Academic.

**Ben:** Right. I see and once you've taken this exam, basically you can start the procedure for moving to and working in the UK, correct?

**Demi:** Exactly. Yes.

**Ben:** Right. I see and just a little bit slightly off topic-- off topic with regards to IELTS; will you be a member of is it the GMC; the General Medical Council we have in the UK?



**Demi:** Yes, that is it.

**Ben:** Right. I see and I guess you will be working with the NHS. Is that right?

**Demi:** Exactly.

**Ben:** Right and has the NHS helped you in any way with this process?

**Demi:** Right now, I'm working with the GMC. I'm in touch with the GMC at the moment as regards my registration. So, that's where I'm at right now.

**Ben:** Interesting. Okay and who was it who told you to go for IELTS? The GMC, an immigration agent, or did you just find it out online?

**Demi:** The GMC requested.

**Ben:** I see, but did they just say-- how did they tell you? Was it mail or are you talking with somebody from within the GMC?



**Demi:** Okay. So, what happens is as an international medical graduate if you studied outside the UK, you have to provide that proof of English language proficiency which is IELTS. So, that's a procedure for all international medical graduates and the GMC is like a standard and everybody knows. If you don't study in the UK you have to have the IELTS and people have to take the tests before they're going to take PLAB which is the medical licensing exam for the UK.

**Ben:** Yes. I remember PLAB. Have you taken PLAB yet?

**Demi:** No. I'm taking that in February hopefully.

**Ben:** Right. Do you take that in Nigeria or in the UK?

**Demi:** Yes, so it's two steps. The first step is in Nigeria. The second step is in the UK.

**Ben:** Interesting. Okay. Let's get back to IELTS. So, what issues did you have with the IELTS exam?



**Demi:** Man, it has to be time. Time, time, and more time. Time is your worst enemy for IELTS both during preparation and during the exam. It's more intense during the exam.

**Ben:** Yes.

**Demi:** Yes.

**Ben:** And before the exam it sounds like it was a bit last minute your preparation.

**Demi:** Well, not exactly. I think I had about two months to prepare for IELTS. I took IELTS initially last year where I had the wrong ideas about the exam. I didn't prepare as much. I think I used three weeks to prepare and the people I was in touch with didn't give me enough information as to what actually happens in the exam, how I shall attack different aspects of the exam. So, I had like a misconception about the exam.

This time I had more time to prepare for the exam. I sat down, looked at the different aspects. I knew after I got my result the last time I had issues with reading and writing. So, for my



instance-- for my own particular case I need at least 7 in all aspects and then an average of 7.5. So, I had issues with reading and writing, so I knew I had to focus on those two aspects. So, I got information about those two aspects and my sister took your course some time ago. She's a doctor in the UK right now. Yes. So, she had issues with writing and then she told me that if you take this guy's course you're going to ace it and I believed her. That's what happened.

**Ben:** Awesome. Love that and you said at the beginning of your answer you said that some guys told you you had to take the IELTS exam, but you didn't really-- they didn't tell you like what it involved. Is that right?

**Demi:** Yes. Yes, that's correct.

**Ben:** Who are these people? I will find them and punish them.

**Demi:** Well, so somewhere in my city. I just go and I saw an advert-- billboards that were in town and I just thought to try them out.



**Ben:** Oh, it was like a physical academy.

**Demi:** Yes. So, I had a few classes, but it wasn't-- if I have to compare my preparation last year and now like it's I can't even compared it. So, it's a world of difference as to the effort and what it actually entails--

**Ben:** Right.

**Demi:** --in terms of preparation.

**Ben:** It sounds like the academy was a touch casual maybe.

**Demi:** Yes. It's an intense exam; the time, the approach. Like if I have to talk about like the writing, for example. Like the details. If I have to talk about the modules I went through with your course, the details of what it entails both task 1 and task 2, the strategies, how do you answer different types of questions, what should you include, what should you exclude, but they



just had like I don't know permit me to use the word carefree like-- it involves so many things. You can't just tell me-- you have to have a strategy. You can't just be basic about it.

**Ben:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Demi:** It's not just any exam.

**Ben:** Yes.

**Demi:** It has a lot of details.

**Ben:** Yes. I can understand students having a casual attitude maybe the first time they take it. It's like I'll go in. I'll do the test, but for actual instructors to have a carefree attitude is borderline criminal. Maybe that's an exaggeration, but it costs time, it costs effort, it costs energy and also it's like a sledgehammer for your confidence if you don't get the grades you want.

**Demi:** True.





**Ben:** Right. So, what grades did you get the first time? Hold back on your final grade. I'll ask you about those in a minute, but what grades did you get on your first attempt?

**Demi:** Okay. So, my listening was 9.0, my speaking was 8.0, my reading and writing were both 6.

**Ben:** Oh, interesting.

**Demi:** Yes. So, initially my-- I don't think I practiced reading as much. I definitely did not have a technique about reading because reading is very technical, but if you have-- I discovered a technique that I used and was very helpful for me.

**Ben:** Share the technique with us, please.

**Demi:** Well, so for reading I found out that most-- and there's a lot of controversy and debate as to whether you should read the questions first or read the answers first-- sorry, read the comprehension first-- the essay first-- the paragraph first or read the questions first. So, I was



going back and forth about this and I think I discovered a technique and it involves reading one paragraph at a time; going straight to the paragraph. Well, you can gloss over the questions initially. Go straight to the paragraph, read that paragraph, go through the questions in that section.

For example, you have a group of paragraphs then you have 1-13 to start with. So, read paragraph A, go through 1-13, look at the questions that are likely linked to that paragraph, and then answer them quickly and then do the next thing for the other paragraphs. So, you go to question B and then read through 1-13, see the questions I have that are related to that paragraph. I found it very, very quick compared to just going back and forth after reading each question. So, you can do that for each section 1-13, 14-26, and then 27 to the last question.

So, that was very helpful and I discovered that also the questions usually follow for some types of questions. For example, the objectives. They almost always follow like the order in which the questions come follow the order in which the paragraphs are given almost always. And then



some other aspects like-- most of the others. The only ones that do not follow that pattern is maybe they ask you to match what an author says within a particular sentence. Yes, that was likely to be scattered. The others I think true or false not given I think that usually follows too, but once you practice this the person-- you understand what I'm talking about. They usually follow.

**Ben:** Yes, yes this is fantastic advice because on our podcast what we do is we say look, there's this technique, there's this technique. As you said, there's quite a big debate about which is right and I always suggest to the students to try both techniques and maybe a new technique and then test which works best for them which is pretty much exactly what you did, no? You found a technique that worked for you.

**Demi:** Yes.



**Ben:** Awesome, awesome and you found out this technique because you were doing-- how did you find this technique because you're doing practice papers or researching online?

**Demi:** Well, I researched online-- excuse me-- so I found a video that discussed this technique. I practiced it a few times. I didn't find it-- excuse me-- I didn't find it helpful maybe because I was just starting to practice it. So, I forgot about it for some time and then I went back to the routine just going back and forth. Then eventually I tried to try it again and when I just tried it a few more times I found-- I got fantastic results. I found out that it was easier. It was more efficient. I was using my time better. I just found it more-- I just found it better compared to the other techniques.

**Ben:** Awesome. That's great. So, you were doing quite a few practice papers and can you tell us how you were preparing for the writing because this was quite a big pain point for you as well, wasn't it, if you got 6.



**Demi:** Yes. You mean how I was preparing before now?

**Ben:** Yes.

**Demi:** The last time I took the test.

**Ben:** Yes.

**Demi:** Well, yes. So, we were just given-- we'd be given essays to write on. I would write the essays. I would turn them in and then the assessments were not detailed of the essays by my instructors then. They just tell you-- they just talk about a few places. One time someone was telling me to just express myself. What does that even mean? That kind of thing. Like am I a writer? I'm not an art student. You're telling me to express myself. So, those are the kind of advice I was getting at the time.

**Ben:** Express yourself, Demi. Use capital letters. Pour your emotions into this.



**Demi:** Funny thing is before I even went there I knew I needed a framework to attack these essays and then someone was telling me that you don't need a framework like it's not good to use a framework. It's not good to use this. I found-- I didn't really believe that, but I'm like okay. Let me just-- I'm not taking this test before let me believe this person knows what she's doing and then of course, after my second attempt I knew that wasn't true.

**Ben:** Wow! What a shame though. What a shame that you had to actually take the test and then basically not only test your English, but you have to test her advice-- the instructor's advice from the academy and basically waste your IELTS test fee testing. You shouldn't have to do that. It's ridiculous. Absolutely it's criminal. So, what kind of like-- what specific problems did you have when you were writing? You said that the instructor said express yourself. Don't choose a framework.

**Demi:** Yes.



**Ben:** It's ridiculous advice.

**Demi:** Yes. I think just-- I think like it was like I said it was a world of difference using your module and speaking with Ms. Daphne. I think that was my teacher. Vocabulary-- my vocabulary was definitely not sophisticated. I'm sure about that; the words I used and then certain phrases, how to begin paragraphs and then I think one huge-- I think what made a huge difference why I believe it was using those examples-- the Sentence Guide. Let me just put it that way. The Sentence Guide, the framework they offered about using academic examples, surveys, research. I had no clue about that. I had no clue about that.

**Ben:** I see. So, just for the audience it seems like-- correct me if I'm wrong, Demi, but it seems like from the course, you learned how to basically upgrade your vocabulary and how to find the vocabulary and apply it. Is that right?



**Demi:** Exactly. Find the vocabulary, using topic-specific vocabulary, using academic examples, sounding academic, not using common vocabulary or everyday vocabulary as it were, and having a framework, understanding how to approach different types of essay questions.

**Ben:** Got you and can you describe-- if you remember-- can you describe the specific moment you realized that this course was kind of like working for you?

**Demi:** I think the response from Ms. Daphne was very helpful. She was very encouraging. Each time I sent my essays in she gave me a lot of confidence. Her responses really boosted my confidence. She just encouraged me all the way and each time I turned in my essays the next one was better than the previous one.

**Ben:** Oh, wow!

**Demi:** So, yes. That was very helpful. That was very helpful.





**Ben:** It's a beautiful feeling, isn't it, when you just get in your work back and you can see the improvement and especially so when the tutor is confirming that your essays are improving. It's magical, isn't it?

**Demi:** That was it. Exactly.

**Ben:** Yes. This is the part that I really enjoyed. Sometimes I correct essays and when I can see between like three essays or even two essays sometimes the transformation of somebody's work from going into basically what's like a spoken-- what seems like spoken English into a full academic formal high-scoring essay. It's truly, truly magical just seeing the speed of the improvement. So, could you just-- I kind of jumped ahead with my last question, but could you tell me-- you mentioned your sister. So, could you tell me like at what point did you decide to work with us? Was it when your sister introduced you to us?



**Demi:** Yes, exactly. So, she knew I was taking the IELTS. She knew I had an issue the first time, so she just thought-- she took the course. It was very helpful to her and she thought I should give it a try. So, immediately I signed up for it.

**Ben:** Okay. Did you have any doubts or concerns before moving ahead?

**Demi:** No, I did not because she had taken the test a couple of times and she had issues with writing consistently. So, she was very positive about your course.

**Ben:** Okay. Did you beat your sister with your IELTS results? Your scores were they higher than hers?

**Demi:** Well, I'm yet to confirm that, but I'm pleased with my results so.

**Ben:** But did you beat her? Sorry to keep digging on this question. Did you get higher than her?



**Demi:** Well, I'm yet to confirm that. She took hers a while back. It's been some years now. She's way older than me.

**Ben:** Oh, okay. Okay. I'm kind of getting the impression you didn't beat her.

**Demi:** Well, honestly like I didn't even ask her.

**Ben:** Okay. Fair enough. I'll leave it. So, tell us now, can you think-- well, you said that Daphne was working with you and she was giving you the feedback. Was there any-- I don't know if you'll be able to remember this, but was there any specific point-- you've mentioned the vocabulary, the structure, the Sentence Guide; was there any other points or details that you remember that really sort of like-- where the light switch just went on and the penny dropped so to speak?

**Demi:** Yes. I noticed that each time-- yes, I think just from your instructions during the modules when your essays are corrected they make corrections. I jotted my corrections for each essay and



I made sure I made those corrections in the subsequent essays. So, I think that made a huge difference. That's what brings the change that you're looking for just inputting those corrections.

**Ben:** Absolutely, yes. Absolutely. You can go through the course and if you don't do the corrections, you're not going to get half as much benefit. This is it. There is work. Just for the listeners; there is work involved. You got to correct your essay according to the corrections we give and then send it back. We review that and it is a process, a system for improving students' work and this is how we consistently get the high scores. So, what scores did you get in the end, Demi?

**Demi:** Okay. So, my listening was still 9.0. My reading was 8.0. My writing was 7.5 and my speaking was 7.5.

**Ben:** Wow! So, you jumped from 6 to 7.5 in the writing.

**Demi:** Yes.



**Ben:** Fantastic! Did you go back down to your local academy and show them?

**Demi:** No, no. I don't want to have anything to do with them again.

**Ben:** Okay. Fair enough.

**Demi:** Yes.

**Ben:** You can start teaching it now, couldn't you?

**Demi:** I'm telling you I'm considering it.

**Ben:** All right. You scored band 9 for the listening. How on earth did you do this? Do you have any strategy to share?

**Demi:** Well, I think you have to pay a lot of attention from the outset as soon as the monologue or dialogue begins-- the test begins. I discovered some tests and some sites that have services to practice these things. Can I show you the website? Is that okay?



**Ben:** Yes, of course.

**Demi:** Yes. So, [ieltsontinetests.com](http://ieltsontinetests.com). Yes. They have options to practice reading, speaking, listening, and I think writing. So, I don't know how their writing works, but for reading-- I used that for reading and listening. So, they have timed tests to practice with. So, a few days before the exam-- I didn't practice my listening so much because I knew I didn't have any issues with this. I discovered that a few days before these tests that I just took now. I figured that it's still a little bit tricky because it's very easy to be carried away during the audio while it's being played because you have to listen up for synonyms, for little details, for spellings. So, it still has-- as much as it's not too challenging, you need to have a little technique when you're approaching it. You have to listen to some-- listen out for details, spelling, synonyms, expressions, and so on.

**Ben:** Right. It seems like developing the ability to focus.

**Demi:** Yes.



**Ben:** To focus and to discern the differences between all the different sounds and obviously the spellings like you said, synonyms. So, it's really like dedicated focus is the key and relentless practice, no?

**Demi:** Definitely.

**Ben:** I get the impression you were doing quite a few of these listening tests. Is that right?

**Demi:** Well, funny thing is I didn't pay as much as in-- I didn't pay as much attention as I did to-- sorry. I didn't pay too much attention to listening because I didn't have issues with it in my previous test.

**Ben:** Oh, got you. Got you.

**Demi:** Yes. So, I just started paying attention to listening about a few days to the test maybe like three days because I didn't remember it to be challenging, but I discovered that-- I'm happy I tried it out because like I said, it's still a bit technical because you can think it's going to be a



breeze, but you just figure that-- during my practice this time, I noticed that by the time-- they had said so many things-- the answers had been in the conversation way before I figured that the answer had been there. I got carried away because you have to listen up for synonyms. You have to listen up for alternative meanings.

**Ben:** So, I guess it was kind of like a case of holding a lot of information in your head and recognizing kind of like the conversation had moved ahead and that the answer was in the previous section.

**Demi:** Exactly. So, yes. I figured that I have to pay serious attention to details.

**Ben:** Very interesting. Okay. So, it seems like it wasn't a case of relentless practice. It was more you had a high score the first time you did it and you were doing the practice test more or less just to get familiar with the format.

**Demi:** Exactly. Exactly.





**Ben:** Right. Interesting and how did your speaking go? You got good grades with that.

**Demi:** Yes. The speaking wasn't too challenging the first time. Same thing with this time. So, it wasn't too challenging, but I have to say that your speaking modules are very, very detailed. As much as I didn't have challenges with my speaking, but for someone that has challenges, you're speaking-- I think your speaking module was very, very helpful as far as the approach goes, the way you should attack the questions, the practice, the amount of questions that were available for practice. Your modules were very helpful.

So, the speaking was okay. I think you just-- I think it's a bit similar to the writing as far as vocabulary goes. You have to elevate your vocabulary. You have to be eloquent. You have to be audible. So, yes.

**Ben:** Yes, yes. That's a good point. Even native English speakers would have to elevate their speaking a little bit just to get those scores. You can't go in there with the mindset of like I'm



having a conversation with my friend. It's more like a job interview and you really got to show the examiner the whole breadth and range and depth of your vocabulary. So, yes, excellent point there, Demi. Excellent point.

**Demi:** Welcome, Sir.

**Ben:** And now finally, as my last question what would you say to anybody who's maybe sat on the fence; who's undecided about whether to join the online course?

**Demi:** Man, I'll tell them to go for it. Don't think too much about it. Just go for it. You have very respectful and responsive responsible instructors over at IELTS Podcast. You will be listened to. Your concerns and your questions will be attended to promptly and you're going to achieve what you set out to achieve. You're going to experience a development and a growth in your English language skills in all aspects.

**Ben:** Awesome. Thank you very much for that, Demi. Thank you and well done, man.



**Demi:** Thank you very much.

**Ben:** Great, dude. All right. So, is there anything else before we finish that you would like to share with the audience about working with us or IELTS in general? Anything that we haven't covered.

**Demi:** Okay. No, not really. I just want to say thank for the opportunity. It was a pleasure going through your course. It was very helpful and then I would like to stress the time factor. Time is very important especially with reading and I think generally most people-- okay. Well, English is the first language in Nigeria, so I don't think many people have issues with listening and speaking. Well, I was speaking to someone recently and the person still talked about reading being an issue. So, I think-- yes, I think you just have to try and find out which-- you have to practice reading and you have to practice writing many times and it has to be timed, too because you can have a great technique and approach, but if you don't time yourself, it's going to defeat the whole purpose.



**Ben:** Exactly. Yes. This is so true. I remember correcting an essay once and I was like this is insanely good and I asked my student how long it took and he said oh, yes. It took two afternoons and I was like dude-- I was like dude, this is-- it's good. I appreciate the dedication, but the next one let's try and write it within at least like two hours at that very least and then we'll work backwards from there.

**Demi:** True.

**Ben:** All right. Thank you so much, Demi.

**Demi:** You're welcome, Sir.

**Ben:** You've been an absolute star. It's awesome interviewing you and I wish you all the best of luck--

**Demi:** Thank you very much.

IELTS SUCCESS

Nigerian doctor jumps from 6 to 7.5 in the writing



**Ben:** --with your UK endeavor.

**Demi:** Thank you, Sir.

[Music]

**Female Voice:** Thanks for listening to [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com)