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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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**Ben:** IELTS Speaking. In this tutorial, we're going to look at a detailed list of idioms and phrases that you can use in the IELTS Speaking exam. The list is full of collocations which as we all know make you sound more natural. Collocations are what native English speakers use every single day. And the good thing is with collocations is that when you start a collocation, the listener is expecting the next few words and this just makes it easier for a listener. And this is why we are big fans of using collocations.



Also as I mentioned, we're going to look at some idioms. Now, idioms are a basically group of words that create a specific meaning around a subject. Now, if that group of words is separated, then the meaning is lost.

However, before we jump into the idioms, let's just have a look at some useful phrases that will help you sound more like a native English speaker. So, the first one is it's a great phrase to set up talking about the past. Now, you could very easily use this in Part 2 and especially when you're giving an example.

So, the phrase is if I remember correctly, it was in 2010, for example. Or if I remember correctly, it was in 2021. And using this phrase it just gives you-- it buys you a few seconds to organize the rest of your thoughts. Now, if we are to use it with an example we could say if I remember correctly, my first birthday that I remember was probably in 1990, for example. Okay?

Now, what we can also use is variations of this such as if my memory serves me well, it was in Hungary that I ate my first lángos, for example or if my memory serves me well, the first paella I



ate was in Valencia; something like this. And again, this buys you thinking time. It's a collocation. I'm half expecting-- if you start with if my memory serves me well, I'm half expecting the rest of it. So, if you start with if my memory serves, I'm expecting me well to come after that.

Now, the good thing here is that hopefully you'll be aware that if we use if I remember correctly, for example, we don't really want to use it again. So, this is why a few variations can help us with our lexical resource score.

Again, another phrase we can use is I can't-- I don't want to say it like that, but what we could say is I can't remember exactly, but I think it was in 1990 when I ate my first paella, for example. I can't remember exactly, but I think it was in England when I discovered fish and chips, for example, okay?



So, I'll just go over those three. If I remember correctly, it was in 2020. If my memory serves me well, this online site has been around for five years. I can't remember exactly, but I think I met my best friend at a conference. So, different examples there.

Now, the next phrase I will share is especially useful for Part 3, okay? And the reason why it's useful for Part 3 is because often we can get questions that we are totally not expecting. So, again it's useful to have a phrase-- a totally natural sounding native English phrase that can buy us a few seconds. The phrase is well, to be honest or even better well, to be totally honest, I've never really thought about it before, okay?

And this is useful for Part 3 because we're going to be asked questions-- rather abstract questions such as do you believe society is becoming more trustful or less trustful, okay? Something like that and you're just blindsided. You're totally surprised and this can just give you a few seconds to organize your thoughts. So, again well, to be totally honest, I've never really thought about it before.



Now, what's important with these phrases and hopefully you're picking up on this as well is the intonation. There is a little bit of melody to these phrases that help us explain and help us communicate. So, another phrase--

And I'll tell you an important tip actually. When you're using these kinds of phrases is that you cannot just copy-paste them. You have to be listening to the question. The speaking exam is a listening exam. You have to pay attention to what the examiner is saying. Otherwise, you just use these phrases and it can end very badly. For example, Part 1. Are you working or are you a student at the moment? Well, to be honest, I've never really thought about it before. Obviously, that's not going to go down well.

Now, a useful universal phrase is I guess you could say. Now, this would be useful if you get the question of are you working or are you student at the moment? Well, I guess you could say I'm a student although I'm only studying remotely and I'm working full-time. So, I guess it's a bit of



both, to be honest. And there it's appropriate to use that phrase and it's quite straightforward as well.

And we use these kinds of phrases when we're not entirely convinced with our answer or we don't really have a black and white answer. So, if the examiner says do you live at home with your parents or do you live alone? And you say well, I guess you could say I live with family although they're not my parents. I live with my auntie. So, here we are kind of answering I'm saying I don't live with my parents, but I live with my family. So, I guess you could say I live with my family is appropriate there.

Now, remember an answer like that where we don't have a black or white-- sorry-- a question like that where we may not have a black or white answer, that's fine. That's fine. At the end of the day, we are getting tested on our ability to communicate that, not on our intelligence or status or anything else. It's a language test. Language is communication.



Next phrase and this is definitely useful for around Part 3 when we get the more abstract questions and also, just to buy us a few more seconds. So, the phrase is it's funny you should mention that because just yesterday... And this sets you up for maybe a story or an anecdote or just a little sort of like a quote-- it's not a quote. Just a little bit of a story you can tell.

So, for example, going back to our difficult Part 3 question. Do you think society has become more honest or more dishonest nowadays? You could easily set that up well with it's funny you should mention that because just yesterday I could have sworn I saw the person in front of me at the supermarket put a stick of chewing gum in their pocket directly off the shelf. However, I'm not entirely sure. So, I decided to stay quiet, but anyway overall, I guess I think that society is becoming more honest nowadays, okay?

So, here in that answer, I circled back to the question. I didn't want to get off topic, but I thought it was a good opportunity just to mention what I did see in the supermarket. So, as I said, it's good just to use this phrase to set up a little anecdote.



And here by the way, even though the phrase is it's funny you should mention that because just yesterday or it's funny you should mention that because the other day my friend recommended that I go to the movie or whatever and here funny does not mean-- it's not funny as in the humorous interpretation. It's in the sort of like coincidence. It's strange. It's odd. It's odd you should mention that. It's strange you should mention that because just yesterday I saw somebody slip a pack of chewing gum into their pockets and I'm sure they were stealing. Anyway, to answer your question... okay? So, just be careful.

Also, if you do not have a natural opportunity to use that phrase in your answer, then do not force it. There's nothing worse than something sounding forced. For example, is your name Ben Worthington? Well, it's funny you should mention that because just yesterday... No. That doesn't work. So, what I'm saying is use them in their appropriate settings.

Here's another very useful phrase for Part 3. For example, we get the question of do you think life is harder nowadays for people your age, okay? Easy answer or an easy way to set up the



answer is well, I think nowadays it's a difficult question because society has changed a lot. So, in some respects, we probably have it easier than our parents did, for example. However, in other respects, it could be quite easy to say life has become harder for us, okay?

So, again, I'm going back to the question that was answered, but it was an appropriate opportunity to use that phrase. Well, I think nowadays it's a difficult question because... And you can explain and you can develop your answer. It sets you up for developing your answer which is a very useful skill to employ. It's a very useful technique. It's valuable, invaluable even.

Now, here's another Part 3 answer or phrase before we move on to the idioms. Now, imagine we get the question of again, do you think life is harder nowadays for people your age than it is for people in previous generations? So, I could start off with this phrase. Yes, definitely. There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, x y z and secondly, x y z.

Now, we use a similar style when we are developing our body paragraphs in the writing exam-- in the Writing Task 2 task and here again, it's important we listen to the question because if we



get a question with a choice in, for example, do you think society has become more trustworthy or less trustworthy nowadays? And then we answer with yes, definitely. There are a few reasons for this. It's not coherent. It's not a coherent answer.

So, remember if we do use this phrase to start off our answer, make sure to adapt it if we get a question with choices. And we could just say something like yes-- well, probably better to start off with the answer. Trust is definitely decreasing. There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, x y z and secondly, x y z.

So, I'll give you a summary of those phrases to help you remember them and then we'll move on to the idioms. If I remember correctly, it was in 1990. If I remember correctly, it was in Yorkshire in England. If my memory serves me well, my teacher taught economics, okay? If my memory serves me well, I met my best friend at a language conference.



Next phrase. Well, to be totally honest, I've never really thought about it before. I guess you could say... I guess you could say... Also, I'm just exaggerating the intonation here just so you get it. It's easier to remember then.

Here's another one. It's important to pay attention to the intonation here. It's funny you should mention that because just yesterday... Can you see? I go up on the more important fragments of the sentence. It's funny you should mention that because just yesterday...

And the final two phrases. Well, I think nowadays it's a difficult question because xyz. Final one. Yes, definitely. There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, x y and z and secondly, x y and z. There we go. Some useful phrases there.

Now, let's quickly fly through 14 idioms that you can use. So, the first one: fresh as a daisy. We all know what this one means. It means basically someone who is lively and attractive. My sister has been traveling for almost 24 hours and she's still as fresh as a daisy. She's still happy and



she's lively and she's not all-- you know how we get sometimes after traveling. We just want the couch which brings me to the next one.

Couch potato. I've got a Spanish friend in Valencia who loves this phrase. He cracked up when I told him I think Joaquin is a couch potato, for example. A couch potato is somebody who will spend a lot of time watching TV or maybe streaming online shows. Binge watching is probably a phrase that'll go well with the couch potato. Just sits there vegetating basically and watching TV show after TV show all afternoon or all morning.

Full of beans: a person who is lively, active, and healthy. My brother is full of beans. He's a fitness freak you could say. A bad egg: someone who is untrustworthy. I think my neighbor is a bad egg. She keeps chasing the pigeons out. Anyway, down to earth: someone who is practical and realistic. Down to earth. We could say maybe Obama was down to earth. I don't think we could say Trump was.



Anyway, a party pooper: someone who's a little bit gloomy and who has no fun at social gatherings. I have a friend actually in Valencia-- Andres-- and we had a big barbecue on my roof once and he brought his own sausages to the barbecue, which is fine. I mean everybody brings food and then we all share, but not Andres. He just wanted to cook. He didn't want to eat anybody else's food and he just brought his sausages and nobody else could eat them and then for his lunch he just had a plate of his sausages. He didn't eat the salad. He didn't eat any other person's food and at that point, I realized he was a bit of a party pooper.

An eager beaver: someone who is hard-working and enthusiastic. My girlfriend says sometimes I'm an eager beaver in the morning usually because she's more of a couch potato in the mornings. Anyway, ball in your court: this is basically when the decision or responsibility to do something is yours. So, if it's me and you talking now, I could say whether you study this afternoon or tomorrow, it's your choice. The ball is in your court. I've given you these phrases and idioms. Now, the ball is in your court whether to use them or not.



Throw in the towel: throw in the towel means to give up. I've taken IELTS five times. I'm throwing in the towel. I'll never be able to pass, for example. Throwing in the towel comes from boxing and it's basically when there's two boxers fighting and one of the fighters is just getting absolutely hammered. Then the coach from his team will throw in the towel and that means that the other boxer has to stop punching him, okay? Throwing in the towel.

Get a head start: that basically means to start off before all the others. So, to start before all the others. So, let's get up early tomorrow to get a head start on our drive to Toronto. Get a second wind: this means have a burst of energy after tiring. Usually, for example, if you're going on a big hike and you've had your lunch-- after you've had your lunch midday, for example, and you've had a rest, you might feel like you've got a second wind and you're full of energy and you can just sprint back.

Jump the gun: this is to start too early. A lot of students jump the gun with their IELTS preparation or taking the exam especially the ones taking IELTS for the first time. They jump the



gun. They book their exam, they turn up, but they haven't done the preparation in time. They haven't done enough preparation and they jumped the gun.

Final two. Give it my best shot. Okay. This test question is really tough. I'll give it my best shot. So, I really tried my best, okay? On the ball: ready and able. My dad is on the ball all the time. It is ridiculous. He's on the ball. He is just always ready. He's always switched on. He's never sleeping. He's never napping. He's just on the ball 24/7. My brother calls him the machine.

Anyway, those are the idioms for today. You don't have to force them in. Try remember them. Try use them in natural everyday conversation first, get some feedback on those, and this way you can slowly incorporate them into your vocabulary and they sound much more natural when it comes to using them in your exam, for example.

And if you do want some feedback, we've got the Speaking Feedback Service. It's about \$9. And what you can do is send in a recording. We will give you some feedback basically. Actually, what happens is you buy the feedback service. We give you instructions such as give us your



answer to this cue card and then you send in your recording-- your answer of the cue card and then we will send you back our recording with our notes, with our observations such as Andres, you need to improve your pronunciation of these words. They sound like this. Or this part was excellent. I love the way you connected the different ideas. So, definitely keep doing that.

And feedback like this just helps you improve quicker, helps you improve faster, and it just makes it a little bit easier especially if you're struggling to find a native English speaker.

Now, that's it from me today. That's everything from me today. I'm really chewing up my words, my vocabulary. Anyway, that's it from me today and I wish you all the best with your IELTS preparation. And remember we've got the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free course. We've got lots of students going through that and getting lots of success and we'd love to see you on that course as well. Take care and good luck with your IELTS exam.

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