



[Music]

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.

[Music]

Ben: Band 8 in the IELTS writing. How are we going to get there? Hello there. My name is Ben Worthington and in this tutorial, we are specifically looking at band 8 for the writing and we're going to look at the grammatical range and accuracy criteria of the exam. Now, some people call it criterion which is technically right because criteria is plural. However, hardly anybody uses criterion because it just sounds weird.

So anyway, let's jump into it. My name is Ben Worthington and I'm from England and I've spent the last 15, 18 years outside of England, so I no longer have my Yorkshire accent. You're probably thankful for that because that means that you can understand me. All right.



So, what have I been doing in those last almost 20 years? Well, I went to Spain. I started teaching English and I quickly specialized in IELTS. And to get better at teaching IELTS I started interviewing all the experts and some of the expertise helped, some of it didn't. I tested it on my students. If it worked, I put it in the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free course and then if it didn't work, I just forgot about it, but all the stuff that does work is in the online course. And I still interview experts every now and again.

However, in this tutorial, I'm going to look at specifically the grammatical structures that you can use. Before we go into that, let's have a look at grammatical range and accuracy. Now then, accuracy with band 7 we can see in the PDF of the marking criteria it says produces frequent error-free sentences, okay?

Now, sentences at band 8 must be more correct than just frequently. It's probably best to assume that like 90% or most of them must be correct. So, remember that at a band 8, the examiner may



be slightly more lenient with errors in complex grammar, but simple grammar should definitely be accurate.

Now, what do we mean by simple grammar? Well, these are kind of like the basics, the foundation. We've got articles-- a, an, the, and then zero article-- prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and then over using the present continuous. So, these are areas where students often make errors and these are kind of like the basics, okay? So, you've got to get these under control before stretching or before implementing some of these next structures that I will tell you about in a second.

Now, range. So, we've just covered grammatical accuracy. Now, we're going to look at the range. Now, some advanced grammatical structures could be the modal verbs-- can, could, would, must, should-- passive voice, and relative clauses. I'll say it again: modal verbs, passive voice, relative clauses.



Now, these also like I said before should be used accurately and as accurate as possible and I'd strongly advise that if you're still struggling with articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and possibly overusing the present continuous-- if you're still struggling with that, you want to get that under control first before even attempting improving your grammatical range score.

So first, we get the accuracy improved. Then we can work on the range and we start using passive voice, relative clauses, and modal verbs. And then once we've got these like up to 90% perfect or ideally 100% perfect, once we've got a good grasp of these and we can use them without having to think, we can use them without incurring any risk or we can use them confidently, then we can start moving on to the ones that I'm going to share right now.

Before we get into those, let me just say that when you are reviewing those areas that I just mentioned, break them down. Don't try and master modal verbs, passive voice, and relative clauses in one day. You're best just working for a couple of days on modal verbs and forget



everything else. Just work entirely on modal verbs. Do exercises. Do translations. Do online quizzes trying to spot mistakes.

And then once you've got it up to the accuracy that you want, move on to passive voice and then just focus and go deep on passive voice. And then likewise with relative clauses and obviously, if you're struggling with articles, prepositions, and whatnot start with articles. Work on those for a week, two weeks until you get them under control then move on to prepositions then move on to subject-verb and then go on to using tenses, okay?

And by breaking it down and focusing on just smaller areas, it becomes manageable. It's less overwhelming and you'll probably see yourself advancing faster as well which is more motivating. And the more motivating it is, then the higher the chances are that you will keep moving forward.

So, let's have a look at grammatical range and accuracy when we are aiming for a band 8. Now, conditional sentences. Conditional sentences will definitely be useful, okay? Now, a lot of



students are familiar with these, but they kind of avoid them because of the combination of tenses required.

Now, when I was learning the conditionals in Spanish, fortunately, it was broadly similar and it wasn't like a big jump from say English to Hindi or English to Chinese. It's relatively similar sort of like we could translate them and there was the equivalent in Spanish. And what I did-- what worked for me was just translation after translation after translation; just back and forth, back and forth and there's lots of decent sites out there.

So, we can use Linguee which is L-I-N-G-U-E-E which has lots of official texts and also you could maybe find Quizlet, but I'm pretty certain out there online you can do quiz after quiz or find text just word banks basically or translation lists and go backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards.

Now, as we all know, there are three conditionals. I won't go into all of them, but once we've learned the basics, there are little sort of like techniques we can do to improve it. So, for



example, if we wrote if governments implemented and enforced measures, pollution could be reduced. That's not too bad, but if we're aiming for a band 8, what we could say would be were governments to implement and enforce measures, pollution could be reduced. You see? It sounds slightly more formal. It's less common. It's slightly more advanced and it just gets us closer to a band 8.

It's also possible to use the if + adjective rather than an entire clause. So, for example, we could say if possible, governments should create public service campaigns regarding fossil fuels. And this way what we're saying is instead of saying if it is possible, we can just say if possible, okay? Again, it's slightly less common. It's slightly more advanced. And just little things like this-- what we're doing is we're stacking the deck. The more little techniques we use like this, the more chances we have of scoring a band 8.

Relative clauses are also another way we can get to band 8. We did mention them before because most students are familiar with using which and that in the writing, but if we're going for a band



8, we need to use them in a higher level. And this means we can use them in relatives with expressions of quantity and relatives with prepositions or connectors.

So, I'll give you some examples. First sentence: the number of full-time students fell to 80,000 in 1985 after which the figure remained stable until the end of the period. You see? This is perfect for Academic Task 1 and I don't think it's entirely difficult. You just find a couple of perfect sentences, translate them into your own language, and then reverse engineer and write them back into English.

Do 10 or 20 of these sentences every single day. Back and forth reverse from English into your language and then from your language into English an hour later or a few minutes later and you will soon get a feel-- and you'll soon kind of like almost automatically start breaking down the formula and the structure.

Another sentence: researchers have discovered that micro plastics many of whose effects are still unknown have been found in sea creatures that are later eaten. One last one: there are numerous



measures that can be taken to reduce air pollution many of which require government intervention. You see?

So, with these as I said before, hopefully you have got a full control of these already if you're aiming for a band 7, but if we want to go for a band 8, we can use them in less common situations such as with expressions of quantity and with prepositions or connectors.

Now, moving on to the next one. Inversion. Now, it's another higher-level grammatical structure and not that many students attempt this. We've talked about this before in our advanced grammatical structures for speaking series. However, we're going to look at it for use in writing. Okay. So, what we could do is put rarely or barely or hardly or never or not only at the beginning of a sentence.

So, for example, we could say not only should citizens use their cars less but they need to use less electricity in their homes also. You see? Another one: never has it been so important to adopt



measures to protect the environment. This means basically it has never been so important to adopt measures to protect the environment, okay?

Now, as I say in the online course, if you're not sure, go with the structure that you know. Go with a structure that you know and you know is accurate because if you get this wrong, it can really sort of like make it difficult to understand what you are trying to communicate. So, review it and learn the rules. It's just a case of inverting the structure. I'm not going to go into it in much detail now.

Moving on to the next one: participle clauses. Now, participle clauses enable us to say information in a more economical way. They're formed using present participles such as going, reading, seeing, and past participles such as gone, read, seen. And we can use participle clauses when the participle and the verb in the main clause have the same subject, okay?

So, first one: having seen the effects of climate change, the scientific community has sounded the alarm on fossil fuel emissions. So, having seen here basically means because they have seen.



Because they have seen the effects of climate change, the scientific community has sounded the alarm on fossil fuel emissions.

However, the higher-level use would be having seen the effects of climate change. And here we can assume that the subject here is the scientific community, okay? Because the scientific community has seen the effects of or have seen the effects of climate change, the alarm on fossil fuel emissions has been sounded, okay? So, just to say it in a different structure, but that is what we're saying when we say having seen.

Now, an example with a past participle would be fully implemented i.e. if they are fully implemented or fully implemented, these measures could reduce the effects of pollution in our urban centers, okay? And then we've got the if clause, but by using could. Fully implemented, these measures could reduce the effects of pollution in our urban centers.



So, as I said before, using participle clauses is a more economical way. It's more concise because in this example, I could have said if these measures are fully implemented, they could reduce the effects of pollution in our urban centers.

However, by using a participle clause, I can say fully implemented, these measures could reduce the effects of pollution in our urban centers. I'm saying broadly the same, but it's with slightly less words which goes back to what I've said in previous tutorials about writing in a concise and succinct manner.

Now, moving on to the final one, we have cleft sentences. These are sentences that begin with it is or it was followed by an emphasized word plus a relative pronoun, okay? Cleft sentences are used to emphasize a particular word or phrase.

I'll give you an example. It is companies which have the responsibility of curbing fossil fuel emissions. So, this basically means companies have the responsibility of curbing fossil fuel emissions. And by using the cleft sentence structure of it is followed by the emphasized word



plus the pronoun, we're emphasizing the fact that it is companies have the responsibility. It is companies which have the responsibility. I could say companies have the responsibility, but I want to emphasize it. So, I say it is companies.

Another type of cleft sentence can be created with a what clause + be + verb or noun. For example, what governments need to do is implement measures penalizing companies that create emissions. This is a really useful sentence because in a lot of the essays, we're asked for like our opinion or our solution and this sentence lends itself perfectly.

For example, we get a question about education and we could say what school boards need to do is x y z. In this sentence, it means governments need to implement measures penalizing companies that create emissions, but it just emphasizes it and again, it's not an extremely common structure and you can also use it in your speaking exam as well.

So, just keep an eye out for those and try and introduce it into your writing. As I said, the last one is very useful for essay writing, but the best way to implement these is just to learn one of them,



master it either by doing translations, by doing quizzes, by reviewing the rules, whatever works for you.

It's your responsibility to find out how you learn best and then learn it and test yourself and if you're feeling really adventurous after you've kind of like reviewed these rules or maybe you just want to accelerate your learning, what you can do is get feedback on them, okay? Get feedback and then find out if you are using them correctly or not, okay?

So, just to summarize, we've looked at cleft sentences, participle clauses, inversion, relative clauses, conditional sentences, and then we also reviewed range and accuracy all with a view of getting band 8.

Now, before we finish, I just want to mention that we have extended the \$5 essay correction. So, you can just go to the site and you'll see the banner at the top. And if you want to accelerate your improvement in writing, then I strongly recommend you get some feedback.



What happens is you go to the site, you purchase it then you get the essay question. It comes up on the screen or it's also emailed to you. You type up your answer, send it to us, and then we'll get it back to you usually very quickly.

And we'll say okay, James. Your use of cleft sentences is perfect. However, your vocabulary needs improving. And we can pinpoint exactly what you need to work on next in order to improve your score. So, I strongly recommend that if you've got your exam on the horizon.

And that's it from for me today and I wish you all the best with your IELTS preparation. And for those students who are in India, I know it's quite tough at the moment and Europe went through exactly the same; probably not as horrific as what's happening in India at the moment, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I wish you the best and just stay safe. Take care and good luck with your IELTS preparation.

[Music]



Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com

