



**Robert:** Hello everybody. It's me Robert Buckingham with you again. Ben's not with me today, so I'm on my own. So, you won't be hearing his voice on this one. So, I better start off by reminding you all to check out all there is to help you to achieve that high band score that you want at [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com).

In fact, there's loads of great material on the topic I'd like to talk to you about today and that is vocabulary. That's why I have this title. It's how much vocabulary do you need for band 7? Okay. Now then, just how important is vocabulary in the IELTS test? About 25% I hear some of you saying. Yeah, that's right. That's right.

It's very important in both listening and reading of course and 25% of the total score in speaking and writing is for what they call lexical resource which I guess is seen from two points of view. The first one is how extensive or wide your vocabulary is and also how deep it is when it comes to particular topics.



Now then, coming back to this title how much vocabulary do you need for a band 7, okay fine. I chose band 7 as the lowest the lowest grade that you're really hoping for. So, I'm possibly going to disappoint you or some of you when I say I don't honestly know.

You see, it all depends what we mean by vocabulary. Are we talking about words, just words? How many words do you know in your native language, in English, or any other language you also speak? And if you knew the answer to any of those questions, does it really matter?

Let's take a dictionary in English, a big one. The Oxford English Dictionary. Okay. It's one of the best I guess amongst several others which are very good. Just to take that example of it, that dictionary has about 170,000 words. So, I say that again: 170,000 different words as well as another 45,000 or so that it defines as out of use or obsolete.

That's a lot of words. We can't know them all, but counting words is one thing and talking about what they call word families or well if you want the official word, they're called lemmas that's

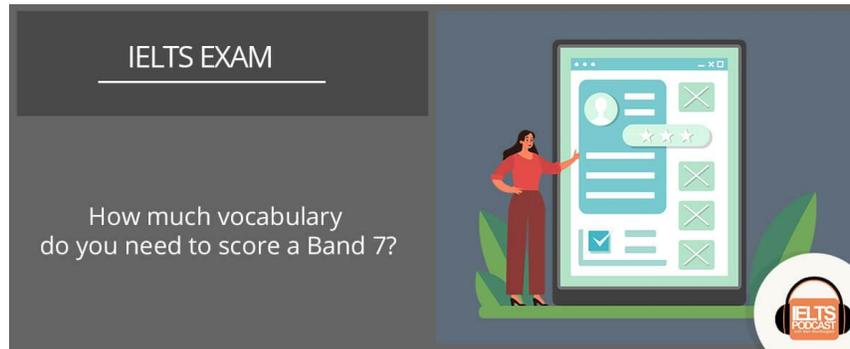


l-e-m-m-a-s is another thing altogether. A word family includes all the inflections and derivatives of a key or what they call a head word.

Take a simple example, very simple example from English. The word run. What have we got? Run, ran, running, runner; verb, adjective, noun. Nice and easy. Nice and easy. Four words, right? That's one family. I think I know that one pretty well. I hope you do, too. That's an easy one, right? That's one family.

Now, according to some experts on vocabulary, a native speaker would probably know about 20,000 word families. And someone taking IELTS? I've read all kinds of estimates from a basic kind of like 1,000 absolutely essential word families we would need for essential understanding and communication right up to anywhere between 6,000 and 9,000 word families, these lemmas.

And that would be I guess for your really top top top IELTS test takers. So, someone learning English who is really fluent what we call in terms of the European Framework of Reference for



Language from a B1 to a C1 right up to a C2. Those kind of people who are saying yeah, just about bilingual.

So, wait a moment. Wait a moment. But even well before we start thinking about the difference between being able to recognize a word, understand it in context and actually using that word in my own speech or writing, of course I'm just the same as everybody else and you too know there are many words I understand, but would I use them? Probably not or maybe never use them in my own writing or when I'm speaking.

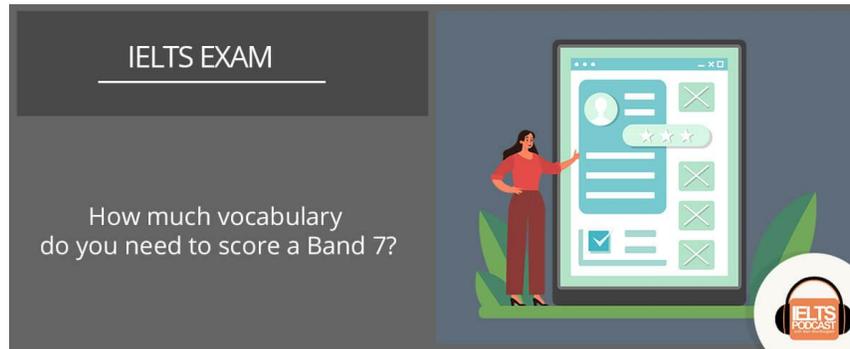
So, at the same time, we must also remember that words do not exist in isolation. They're always going to be happy side by side with other words that they often keep company with, what we call collocations. You've probably heard that word a lot. I know it's one of Ben's favorite words and he's quite right. Words stick together with other words. They may make friends with other words that have similar meanings, synonyms.



And as well as being a little bit worried, a little bit cautious perhaps in the company of words that have very dissimilar or different meanings, the antonyms. So, we've got collocations, synonyms, antonyms. You know that in the IELTS test everywhere we've got to paraphrase things. We got to see how words can be used similarly and in different ways.

Okay. Let's go back to that example of mine run. Run, ran, running, runner. Okay. I'm going to give a few examples of that word run. Do you know them all? Would you have problems understanding any of them? How many would you feel confident about using in your own speech or writing?

Here we go. Okay. Let's start with the easy ones. How fast can you run? Oh, I used to be able to run pretty fast. Usain Bolt ran 100 meters in 9.8 seconds. Oh dear, are you okay? How did you hurt your ankle? Well, I was running for the bus and slipped and fell. Oh dear. So, there I've got one, two, three, four uses of run, running, ran. Pretty easy, just as a verb. We all know that simple basic meaning of the verb to run.



How about going on to runner? Okay. I think this is true, isn't it? They're amazing. Ethiopia, to take perhaps the most important country in this event, Ethiopia has many of the best marathon runners in the world. Okay. So, we've got the noun there; runners, athletes, long distance runners, 100 meter runners like Bolt, for example.

How about using running in this case? Though this is running as an adjective. Listen. I seriously believe that running water is the basis for progress in health and hygiene. Yes. We just depend on it, don't we? Fresh clean water. We go to the kitchen, to the bathroom, we turn on the tap or what the Americans call the faucet and out comes the water. It's running water. It's running water.

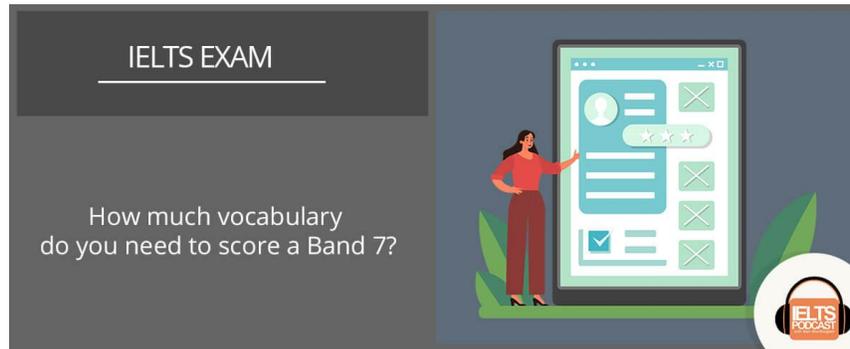
How about this for running? Did you know that-- I guess you did-- Joe Biden's running mate in the presidential election was Kamala Harris? They won and so she is now the vice president of the United States. In American politics they go in pairs, don't they? The president and the vice president and they run for office and you have your other person running with you and that's your running mate.



Interesting, isn't it? We're getting into meanings of run which are very much more idiomatic, aren't they? How about this one? Do you get this one? As soon as he saw the police were watching him he did a runner. Really? So, is he on the run? Yeah and they say he's dangerous. So, if you run into him be careful.

So, there I've got three examples where we would use expressions like to do a runner. Oh my God. I wouldn't advise you to use that in any formal context. It's very informal and what it means of course is he escaped. He ran away from the police. He did a runner. So, if you're on the run-- he is on the run-- you are escaping from the authorities, from the police, for example.

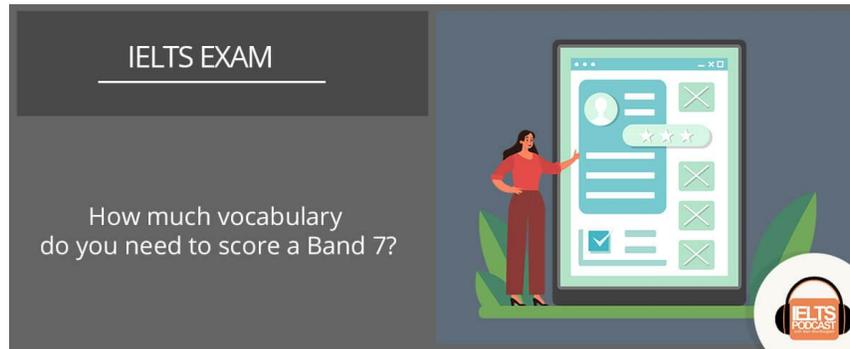
And if you run into him, oh that could be dangerous, but often you run into your friends. You meet somebody just by chance. It's one of those many many many hundreds of phrasal verbs, the verb with a preposition which has a particular meaning.



How about this? I'm going back to running and also the word run in a phrase. Listen to this. It's about sport. I'm very unhappy because oh my team is playing so badly. We've lost five games running. And I get the reply from my friend. Mine is just the opposite. We're on a great run. So, do you feel that one? I think I'm trying to make it pretty clear from the way I was saying it. If you lose five games running or of course alternatively, if you win five games running, it means in sequence just like the expression we often use in a row.

On a great run or of course the opposite on a terrible run, on a bad run means a series of consecutive events. If you're on a run it means you're winning, you're winning I never liked the idea of casinos in gambling, but some people who do enjoy that say oh, I'm winning. I'm winning. I'm going to play again. I'm on a run. I can't stop winning. I don't believe it.

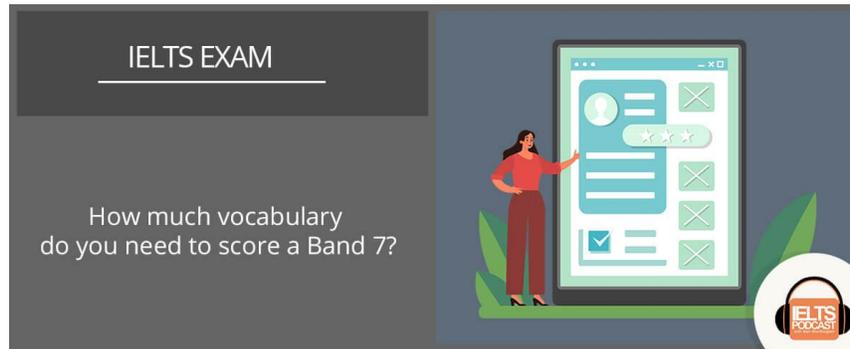
Okay. Of course, I could go on and on and on and on. There are lots and lots of phrasal verbs with run. Let me give you a list. Run away, run off, run out, run out of cash, run into somebody or something. We just saw that one, didn't we? Run off with somebody or something, run down,



to look run down when you're looking tired or ill. Ooh, you look a bit run down. Are you feeling okay? Oh, I've been working so much. I feel very tired.

And also of course we talk about a run-down part of town; a part of the city which is in not good condition. It needs repairing. It needs work. It needs painting. It's run down. So, I don't know. How many of you could honestly say yes, I knew all of those ways of using run. I use them when I need them. Of course, I've been very confident in using that verb in all situations. Congratulations.

But of course, many of us would say oh, that's new for me. I didn't know that. Maybe some of you could say yes, I recognize all of those uses. I don't use all of them. Of course, that's the way we are with language. That's what language and vocabulary is. We can't know and use everything. We always understand more than we can actually produce, but how much vocabulary then do I need for that band 7?



Okay. I really need to be very aware of the task ahead that exam I'm going to take and I might be saying to myself I know quite a bit of English. I've been studying for a long time. Maybe I even work with a few native speakers and I can read perfectly well and I think I understand almost everything. Yeah. I can speak pretty well too, but there's always more to learn and usually when we say that, we mean more vocabulary.

So, just give a few moments thought to what are the ways to do this? Of course it takes time and patience. Everybody agrees that there's a difference, for example between passive and an active word or active vocabulary. We obviously as I said can recognize a lot more than we actively use, but just about everybody else of course also agrees on the best ways to organize vocabulary learning.

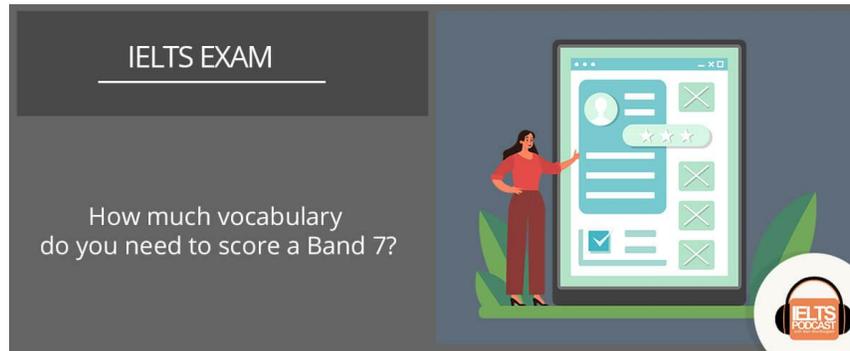
That's why I'm not going to talk about it very much because it's everywhere. It's on your [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com). It's in other sources. It's in official ones and unofficial ones. They always tell



you the same things. They've been telling you this for about, oh I don't know how many years. I think about 20 years.

It says well, you should keep a special vocabulary notebook and note down new items in a very organized way. For example, it could be grammatical categories, synonyms, antonyms, and perhaps most important of all the context where you found the word. Write down that sentence. Write down that expression where you found it so you've got it as a reference and information about the word.

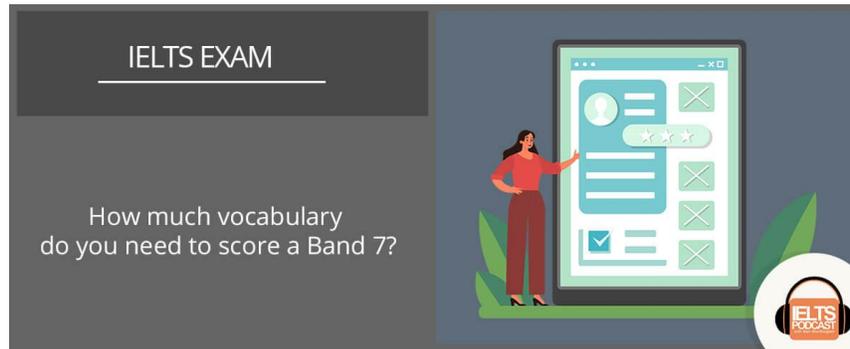
Of course IELTS and IELTS fans all over the world you are also particularly fond of word lists according to those topics. There are some very good ones here on [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com) actually. They're useful, aren't they? All right. Education and I check the word list the essential words to use are associated with education or technology or whatever. These lists fit nicely into the range of IELTS topics that come up in all parts of the tests; education, technology, arts and culture, and so on.



A good vocabulary learner is also someone of course who reads extensively, listens actively, tries to put into practice new things. I'm not going to go into great deals as I said on those things. This is advice you will find everywhere as I said. All you got to do is just Google it or get into [ieltspodcast.com](http://ieltspodcast.com).

Reading extensively, noting your words, keeping your record of it, coming back to it, adding new meanings, looking at new things. Imagine a page that you could have on our word run, for example. How long would it be now if you added all of those meanings, all of those possible examples particularly the phrasal verbs?

Okay, but I think recording and noting down stuff is just the very important first stage. How do we make these new items part of our active vocabulary? There's an expression I came across recently on the IELTS Podcast tutorials online concerning vocabulary and I really liked it. Thanks, Ben. I don't know if it came from you. It probably did, but this is it.



The word is hardwiring. Hardwiring a word or hardwiring the expression. I liked it because it means this: to hardwire something is to really make it part of you, make it part of your system. If you were like a computer of your wiring system in your brain and in your heart too making it really a part of you.

And I agree with what I read online in that tutorial 100% with the advice it gives. It said note it down. Work on it. How? By mimicking, imitating native speaker examples, sounding it out. There's nothing better. I've done it in other languages. You do it in English. You walk around talking to yourself. People think you're crazy, but don't worry about it too much. Just say the words to yourself. Say it out loud or say it quietly to yourself. Try it out. See if you feel comfortable using it. Invent your own examples.

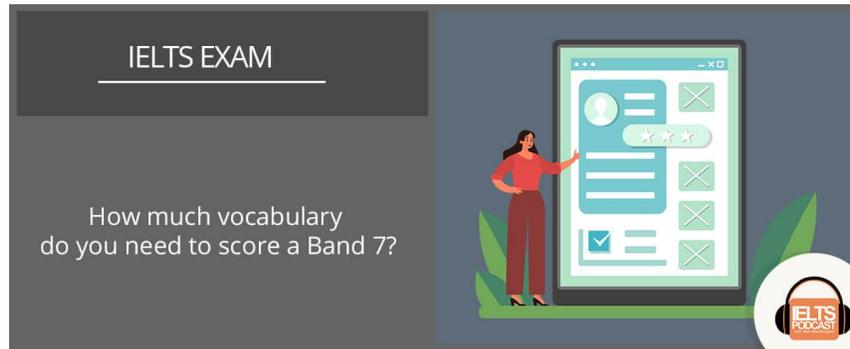
Ask yourself and ask other people, too. Hey, can I say this like this? Is this okay? Is it all right? I've just tried it out. Do you think that's okay? Oh, I see. It's not quite right. Thank you very much. Go back again and revise your ideas and work it out again.



Obviously, we're not always going to get it right. I can't remember who it was, but ages ago, I read someone who said you shall know a word from the company it keeps. In other words, collocations, strong associations of words together are so very very important as well as what we call register.

What does that mean? It means how an expression or word might be used in a formal situation or in an informal situation. It might be very general or it might be restricted to a particular case. Going back to my example of run, for example, obviously in an IELTS essay, it would probably not be appropriate to write although the grammar here is perfect, but the expression is a little bit informal.

Let's imagine we're discussing crime and punishment and rehabilitation of criminals and you write this sentence: There is always the danger that prisoners allowed to spend time at home during the weekends might do a runner. It's perfect up to that thing might do a runner. All you really mean is that they might escape, not go back to prison or whatever, but do a runner is

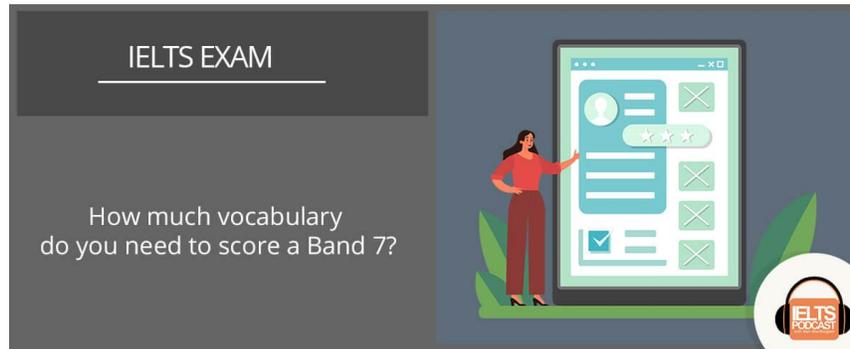


totally kind of or I'll say it to you street language. We don't write it down. We say it and not many people say it anyway. I don't think I've ever said it myself before until today.

So, in the speaking test maybe. Let's think in the speaking test. Maybe I'm talking about a topic describe a time when your mobile or cell phone was really useful to you. I've seen that a long time ago when I was still an examiner. I'm an ex-IELTS examiner.

And if someone said to me well, I was driving back to the city late at night when I noticed the petrol or the gasoline gauge in my car was really low. I was running out of petrol and I couldn't see a petrol station anywhere. So luckily, in fact I knew someone who lived nearby, so I got up my phone and I called them up and end of problems.

So, yes. I was running out of petrol. Running low, running out, running low, running out of, when something just goes. Running out of time. I don't know if we're running out of time. I don't



know how long I've been talking. We'll be stopping in a minute. It's a possible topic to use of course in that context in a speaking test a colloquial expression, a phrasal verb perfectly.

So, those are two examples of what we call register. Informal context: speaking perhaps, formal context: IELTS Writing Task 2 exam.

Okay. Before I go, let's remember one or two key points here. 1) Seriously folks, I guess there's no real sense in worrying about how many words we know and how many words we need. There's always room of course for more words. Words, even simple words. Run, for example can have lots of meanings and be used in different contexts. We may not ever know all of these meanings and contexts, but we should be familiar with the main or more common ones.

And to make new words part of us, to hardwire them, we have to work at it and most people agree about how to do that. The notebook, the reading, the noting down, the coming back, the listening, to be curious, to be interested in words. Make it fun.



Even using dictionaries which I haven't talked about much today, but I tell you online dictionaries some of them have very good information about words. Try it out. If you like it, that's great. If you don't, I'm sorry, but try it out at least, okay?

So, something that you really need of course in all of these things is practice, practice, and practice. A good old-fashioned and trusted way is to write a word, its grammar, and its meaning to on a card. We call those things flash cards. It's from learning languages from 50 years ago. On one side of the card, I write the meaning of the word-- the word itself, its meaning, its grammar, is it a verb, is it an adjective, is it a verb and a noun, whatever.

On the other side, on the reverse side of the card I write an example or two of the word in context. He did a runner, for example, leaving a blank space omitting the word itself or the expression itself. Later on, later on every week, every day, every month, every once in a while you can test yourself.



Look at the word and think of the example. Turn it over. Was your example a good example? Does it fit the examples you already have or did you remember the example word for word? On another day or on another occasion, do the opposite. Read the examples and think what's this word or what's this expression here? Oh yeah. And then turn over the card and check your answer. Simple way.

Keep it going. Always come back to the word. You cannot just look at a word-- well, you can, but it's very rare I think-- look at a word once and always remember it. You've got to come back to it. You've got to feel it and come back to it many, many times. I think someone said-- I don't know-- why years ago you've got to see or be familiar with the word at least 7 times before it becomes part of you. I don't know if it's 7 times, but that's just another number we can think about, okay?

Okay. I'll be talking to you again I think about this topic of vocabulary. I've got a few more things I'd like to say about it. In the meantime, keep studying and don't forget as Ben always



says check out all those offers and deals you've got on [ieltpodcast.com](http://ieltpodcast.com); your IELTS materials, your feedback, advice on your writing exams and keep going. I'll speak to you again soon, okay? So, for me it's goodbye for now and I'll talk to you later. Bye.

[Music]

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