

IELTS SPEAKING PART 3

IELTS Speaking Part 3: common question types

Here are 3 common question types that the examiner could ask you:

1. Compare and contrast.
2. Give an opinion.
3. Imagine.

If the topic is 'cities', the examiner could ask:

1. How is life different in cities compared to rural areas?
2. How do you think life in big cities could be made easier?
3. What do you think cities will be like in 50 years time?

In my answers below I've underlined a few 'markers' that show comparisons, opinions and future predictions.

1. Firstly, the cost of living in cities is much higher. Housing is much more expensive in cities compared to rural areas; everything costs more. I think life in cities is more difficult. There are more people, so there's more competition for jobs. Life is a lot slower in rural areas, everyone knows each other and there's a sense of community. I don't think rural areas experience the social problems that you find in cities, like crime and homelessness.
2. In my opinion cities need to be well-planned. Good public transport can definitely make life easier because there are so many people and it can be really stressful just to move around. Public areas like parks are also important because people need space to relax, and I think cities should be made into healthier places to live and work.
3. I imagine cities will be less polluted because we'll have electric cars and better public transport. More people might work from home so maybe cities won't be so busy. But I

think there will probably still be problems because more and more people are migrating to cities. So I'm not so optimistic about issues like crime, homelessness and unemployment.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: add more detail

In [this lesson](#) I mentioned 3 techniques to help you give longer answers: ask yourself why, explain the alternatives, give an example.

Most students have no problem with the first step (explaining why), but they aren't so good at giving alternatives or examples. Take the following question from last week's lesson for example.

Question:

In your opinion, are newspapers important?

Example student answer:

Yes, in my opinion newspapers are very important (*why?*) because they give us information about what is happening around the world. (*why?*) They are a vital source of knowledge about education, technology, medicine and many other fields.

This is a good start, but let's try to raise the answer to band 9 level.

Example answer with 'alternative' and 'example':

Yes, in my opinion newspapers are very important (*why?*) because they give us information about what is happening around the world. (*why?*) They are a vital source of knowledge about education, technology, medicine and many other fields. (*alternative?*) If newspapers didn't exist, I think the quality of news coverage would suffer because there would be fewer professional journalists. (*example?*) We would have to rely, for example, on unpaid bloggers who do not have the budgets to carry out detailed research before they write an article.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3, the examiner often asks a question about the past and a question about the future. For example:

1. Did people have more free time when your grandparents were young?
2. Do you think the hobbies people have will be different in the future?

In the first answer, the examiner wants to hear some past tense verbs. In the second answer, you will need to use a future tense:

1. When my grandparents were young, I think they had less leisure time. They didn't have the gadgets we use nowadays, so they probably spent more time doing simple things. For example, nowadays we can cook meals in a microwave in less than 5 minutes, whereas in the past people had to cook everything themselves.
2. No, I don't think hobbies will change much in the future. I'm sure people will still play games and sports. On the other hand, maybe the Internet is changing the way we spend our free time. In the future, more and more people might have online hobbies.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3 of the IELTS speaking test, you will probably get some questions about the past and the future. The examiner will be listening carefully to make sure you use the correct tense.

- If the examiner mentions “50 years ago”, “when your parents were young” or “when you were a child”, you should answer using the past simple.
- If the question asks you to predict, or if it mentions “in 50 years” or “in the future”, use a future tense (will + infinitive).

Do you think people had easier lives 50 years ago?

Yes, maybe life was simpler and less stressful 50 years ago. The mobile phone didn't exist, so I suppose it was easier to forget about work at the end of the day because people couldn't contact you so easily.

Do you think life will be more stressful in the future?

Yes, it probably will be more stressful. As the world gets smaller, employees will probably have to travel to different countries more often and stay in touch with colleagues and clients all over the world. There will also be more competition for jobs and the cost of living will keep going up.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: "it depends"

Many students answer questions in IELTS speaking part 3 by saying "it depends".

"It depends" is not a full answer. What does it depend on, and why?

Example question:

Do you think it's important to find a job that you love, or is it more important to earn a good salary?

Don't say:

"It depends. Some people prefer to find a job they love, but other people want to earn a good salary." (This answer just repeats the question)

Do say:

"Personally, I'd prefer to do a job that I really enjoy; as long as I earn enough to live comfortably, the salary is less important. However, I can see the benefits of doing a job that you don't like if it pays well. With a good salary, you can probably do more enjoyable things in your free time.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: longer answers

Do you remember my advice about how to give longer answers in part 3?

- Answer the question directly
 - Ask yourself why or how (and explain in detail)
 - Give an example
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- Mention an alternative or opposite answer

Example question

Do you think the seasons still influence people's behaviour?

Example answer

Yes, I do think the seasons affect how we behave. (*how?*) We still wear different clothes depending on the weather, and clothes shops change what they sell according to the season. We also adapt our habits and daily routines according to the time of year. (*example*) For example, people in my country like to eat outside in their gardens in the summer, but we can't do that during the other seasons. (*opposite*) On the other hand, I don't think we notice the change in seasons when it comes to food; the big supermarkets import food from around the world, so most people don't buy seasonal fruit and vegetables any more.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: finish strongly!

When I was an examiner, I remember that not many candidates performed well towards the end of the speaking test. After trying really hard in parts 1 and 2, many people seemed to run out of energy when they got to part 3.

So, how can you make sure that you finish strongly and do well in part 3?

I think the secret is to answer according to a simple 3-step formula: answer the question directly, then explain in detail, then give an example (e.g. a personal experience). I've included a fourth step in [this lesson](#), but the first 3 steps are the easiest to use.

Note: You need to practise consciously going through the 3 steps as you give an answer (maybe you could count the steps on your fingers). Otherwise, you'll go back to your old technique of saying whatever comes into your head!

IELTS Speaking Part 3: long answer technique

Here's the technique that I recommend for giving long answers in part 3:

1. Answer the question directly
2. Explain why
3. Give an example
4. Explain the alternative / opposite

Here's an example using a question from last week's lesson:

Do you think that it's better to have clear aims for the future, or is it best to take each day as it comes?

(Answer) I think it's best to have a good idea of what you want to do with your life, especially in terms of studies and career. (Why) Having aims allows you to plan what you need to do today and tomorrow in order to achieve longer-term objectives. (Example) For example, if you want to become a doctor, you need to choose the right subjects at school, get the right exam results, and work hard at university. (Opposite) Without a clear aim, it would be impossible to take the necessary steps towards a career in medicine, or any other profession.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: follow on from part 2

Questions in part 3 of the speaking test are supposed to follow on from the topic of part 2. So, if the part 2 topic is [a future aim](#), you might expect some part 3 questions like these:

1. Do you think it's better to have clear aims for the future, or is it best to take each day as it comes?
2. People often say that goal setting is necessary for success. Do you agree with this?

Try preparing detailed answers to these questions using the 'longer answers' techniques in [this lesson](#).

IELTS Speaking Part 3: for example...

In part 3 of the speaking test, you should try to give longer, more detailed answers. A great way to do this is by giving an example.

However, I've noticed that students often forget to give an example, even when I've just told them to answer using the three steps: 1) direct answer 2) explain 3) give an example.

Here's the solution to this problem: when answering in part 3, force yourself to say the words "for example". When I force my students to say these words, they always manage to find an example, and the result is that they always give better answers. Try it: just force yourself to say the words "for example", and see what happens.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: answer structure

Did you notice how I structured my answers in [last week's lesson](#)?

Answer 1

1. Answer the question - "it depends"
2. Explain one side
3. Explain the other side
4. Give an example

Answer 2

1. Firstly - first characteristic of a good listener
2. Secondly - second characteristic
3. Finally - third characteristic

Answer 3

1. Answer the question - "it's a mixture of both things"
2. Explain one side

3. Explain the other side

Basically, I'm using *Idea, Explain, (Example)* or *Firstly, Secondly, Finally*, just as I do when I'm writing main paragraphs for writing task 2. The more you practise using these two patterns, the easier it becomes to give longer, more coherent answers.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: think 'paragraph'

In part 3 of the speaking test, you should try to give longer, detailed answers. A good way to do this is to imagine that you are making a paragraph.

Remember the 'paragraph building' techniques that we use in writing task 2:

Idea, explain, example

Start with a direct answer to the question, like the 'topic sentence' in a written paragraph. Then explain your answer in more detail, and support your explanation with an example.

Try answering this question: Do you think that it's important for people to go on holiday?

Firstly, secondly, finally

Start with the direct answer, then explain it by giving two or three reasons, and maybe an example too.

Try answering this question: Why do you think some people prefer not to go abroad on holiday?

IELTS Speaking Part 3: make it personal

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, it really helps if you give personal examples:

1. Do you think it's important for people to have hobbies? Why?

Yes, I think people need to have hobbies because we all need to do things we enjoy in our spare time. In my case, I find that playing football once a week with some friends helps me to relax, keep fit and forget about work. I think it's the same for everyone.

2. Can hobbies have any negative effects?

Yes, if you spend too much time on your hobby, it can affect other parts of your life. I remember that one of my friends spent most of his time at university playing computer games instead of studying. In the end, he failed most of his exams.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: more long answers

Here are two more answers using the techniques I explained [last week](#):

What do you think are the most important qualities for friends to have?

Maybe the most important things are that friends need to share common interests and be honest with each other. (why?) Friends are people we spend a lot of time with, so it definitely helps if they enjoy doing the same activities or talking about the same topics as we do, and of course we need to be able to trust our friends, so honesty is vital for a good friendship. (alternatives / example?) I think I would struggle to become friends with someone who didn't have anything in common with me, or who wasn't reliable or trustworthy.

How important do you think it is for a person to spend some time alone?

I'd say that it's essential to spend a bit of time alone, even if it's just a few minutes a day. (why?) When you have a few minutes to yourself, it's a chance to take stock and reflect on things. (why?) Most of us live such busy lives that our brains need time to catch up every now and then. (example / alternatives?) Personally, I try to have a bit of "me time" every day; I'll go for a coffee or find a quiet place to sit and read the newspaper. If I never had any time alone, I think I'd go mad!

IELTS Speaking Part 3: longer answers

Here are 3 techniques to help you give longer, more detailed answers:

1. Keep asking yourself "why?"

2.Explain the alternatives

3.Give an example

Question:

Do you think that school children should be encouraged to have their own ideas, or is it more important for them to learn what their teachers give them?

Answer:

I think that we should definitely allow children to be creative and have their own ideas. (why?) Children need to develop the ability to think for themselves and solve problems (why?) because as adults they will not always have somebody to guide them or tell them what to do. (alternatives?) If we don't allow children to have their own ideas, they will be less successful in the adult world; they will be too reliant on others. (example?) A doctor, for example, might encounter a situation that he or she hasn't been trained for, but will still be expected to make a decision that could save someone's life.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: films

When answering the two questions below, you should be aware that the examiner is expecting to hear some different verb tenses.

1. Do you think films have changed since you were a child?

No, I don't think films have changed much since I was a child. When I was younger I enjoyed watching action films, and the Hollywood formula for this type of film seems to be the same today. For example, I liked the original 'Superman' films, and superheroes are still a popular subject for film-makers.

2. As the technology for home viewing improves, do you think people will stop going to the cinema in future?

No, I don't think that people will stop going to the cinema. People can already buy fantastic home viewing equipment, but it still feels more special to share the experience of watching a new film

with a theatre full of people. I don't think that technology will be able to replicate that cinema atmosphere.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'community' answers

Here are my sample answers for the part 3 'community' topic:

1) What are some of the ways people can help others in the community? Which is the most important?

I think there are many ways to help others in our local communities. For example, where I live, some people volunteer to run activity clubs for children, or they help out in residential homes for elderly people. Others give money, food or clothes to organisations that support people living below the poverty line. In my opinion, there isn't a scale of importance when it comes to helping others; all forms of help are positive.

2) Why do you think some people like to help other people?

Most people get a good feeling when they help others, and they understand that we can all experience difficult times in our lives when we might need support. For example, we all grow old, and we all run the risk of losing our jobs or having a health problem that affects our ability to look after ourselves. So, I think people help others because they empathise with them.

3) Some people say that people help others in the community more now than they did in the past. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

I disagree with that kind of opinion. It's impossible to generalise about how much people help in their communities from one generation to the next, so I don't think we should try to judge or compare how altruistic people are now or were in the past. There have always been those who help others and those who don't.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'advice' answers

Here are my sample answers for the 'advice' questions from [this](#) lesson:

1. Is it better to get advice from a friend or from a family member?

I think it depends on the kind of advice that you need. Parents and grandparents probably have more life experience than a friend, and so you might get a wiser or more sensible answer from them. On the other hand, friends are less likely to become too worried if you go to them with a problem. For example, I probably wouldn't want to burden my parents with a financial problem.

2. What would you say are the characteristics of a good adviser?

Well, firstly, a good adviser should be a good listener, someone who takes the time to understand the situation before offering advice. Secondly, an adviser should try to be objective, and avoid judging the person who is seeking help. Finally, I think the best advisers have the ability to ask the right questions and encourage others to find their own answers.

3. Should people make their own work and career decisions, or is it a good idea to ask for advice about this?

I'd say that it's a mixture of both things. Most of us talk to family, friends, teachers or colleagues before we make career choices. However, I believe that the final decision should rest with the individual; we all need to take ultimate responsibility for the big life choices that we make.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'TV programme' answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions that I shared with you last week. Notice that I use the 3 or 4 steps that I recommended, and remember to note down any good words or phrases that you find.

1. Do you think most people watch TV for education or for entertainment?

I think people watch TV primarily for entertainment. There are far more entertainment programmes than educational ones, and in my experience most people treat television as a form of relaxation in the evening. If I think about the most popular TV programmes in the UK, such as talent shows like 'X Factor' or soap operas like 'Eastenders', the focus is definitely on entertainment rather than education.

2. *Should TV play a role in educating children? How?*

Yes, it definitely should play a role in my opinion. Good children's TV programmes should tell stories that contain some kind of lesson about how to behave or what is morally right and wrong. Many of the traditional fairy tales, such as 'Cinderella', have been made into TV programmes, and there is always a positive message in those stories.

3. *How do you think TV viewing habits change as people get older?*

TV viewing habits obviously change a lot as we get older. While toddlers might watch programmes about talking animals, teenagers prefer action and adventure or sports, and as adults we start taking an interest in news and politics. My own preferences, for example, have changed over the years - I would never have watched news programmes when I was younger. I think it would be very strange if our viewing habits didn't mature!

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'paragraph' answers

Here are my answers to the questions in last week's lesson.

1) *Do you think that it's important for people to go on holiday?*

Answer using 'idea, explain, example'

Yes, I think we all need to go on holiday at least once or twice a year. It isn't healthy to work all year round without some time off to relax; we all need to take a break and recharge our batteries from time to time. Last summer, for example, I went on holiday to France for a couple of weeks, and it was great to leave all of my usual responsibilities behind me. I came home feeling really refreshed and reinvigorated.

2) *Why do you think some people prefer not to go abroad on holiday?*

Answer using 'firstly, secondly, finally'

I suppose there are different reasons why some people choose not to go abroad on holidays. Firstly, it's usually more expensive to travel abroad than it is to stay at home. A second reason

could be that some people find it stressful to spend time in a foreign country where they don't speak the language, or where they feel that they can't easily integrate with the locals. Finally, many people just love where they live, and don't feel the need to travel abroad.

IELTS Speaking: 'hospitality' topic

1. In your country, how do people treat visitors from abroad?

I think we treat visitors well. People in the UK are very open-minded and welcoming, and we enjoy the mix of cultures that immigration and tourism bring. Most UK cities, for example, are really cosmopolitan, and you can meet visitors from every part of the world.

2. Do you think hospitality towards visitors is less important than it was in the past?

In my city, maybe it's true that hospitality is less important nowadays, but that's only because we are so used to seeing visitors from different countries, so we treat it as a normal part of life and nothing too special.

3. What are the advantages of staying with a friend compared to staying in a hotel when visiting a foreign country?

If you stay with a friend, you benefit from someone with local knowledge of the best places to visit. You can also get to know the character and customs of the local people, and for me, this is one of the most interesting aspects of a visit to another country. On the other hand, if you stay in a hotel, you are forced to discover the new place on your own, so it's more of an adventure.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: transport

In part 3 of the speaking test, it's common to get questions about the past and future, as well as questions about 'now'. The examiner will be listening to your use of verb tenses:

What types of transport are there in your town?

In Manchester I think you can find every form of transport apart from an underground system. You can drive around the city by car or get on a bus; thereare even free buses that take people between the train stations. Manchester alsohas a tram system, and of course there are taxis too.

How has transport changed since your grandparents were young?

Well, they had cars, trains and planes back then, and London already had the underground system, but I suppose the difference is that technology has moved on. Having said that, the transport system is not necessarily better nowadays; people travel a lot more, and I'm sure we spend more time stuck in traffic.

What types of transport do you think we will use in the future?

I'm not sure, but hopefully we'll have cars that drive themselves and never crash. I think we'll probably fly more, and it might become normal to have your own plane. On the other hand, many cities are building more bicycle lanes, so maybe we will use cars less for getting around towns and cities.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: questions about the future

When the examiner asks a question like the one below, you know that you are being tested on your ability to express ideas in the future tense.

How do you think the design of homes will change in the future?

Example answer:

I don't think there will be much change in terms of what houses look like from the outside. In this country, people still like traditional brick or stone houses. Having said that, the design of apartment blocks will probably continue to develop, with more and more experimental or futuristic buildings made of glass and metal. I imagine that it will be the insides of homes that change the most; houses will no doubt be full of technological devices to make our lives easier. Maybe we'll have things like voice-controlled doors, lights and appliances.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'history' topic

Questions in part 3 of the speaking test follow on from the topic you were given in part 2. So, after last week's [historic event](#) question, you might be asked some further questions about history and events. For example:

1. What do you think we can learn by studying events of the past?

I think we can learn a lot by studying history. Just as individual people learn from their mistakes, societies can learn from the mistakes made by previous governments or leaders. For example, from what I've read in the newspapers, many economists are looking back to the time of the Great Depression, around 80 years ago, in order to understand the financial crisis that is currently affecting many countries around the world. Even if we don't always learn from mistakes, I think it's fascinating to study history because it gives us an insight into who we are and where we come from.

2. What important events do you think might take place in the future?

It's really difficult to predict what will happen in the future; most of the big, historic events of the past would have been impossible to foresee. For example, I don't think that anyone living 100 years ago could have imagined that people would one day walk on the moon! If I had to guess what might happen in the future, I'd like to think that scientists will invent cures for diseases like cancer, and we'll all live longer.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'politeness' topic

Two weeks ago I showed you a part 2 question about [a situation in which you were polite](#). Let's have a look at some related questions for part 3 of the test:

In your country's culture, how do you show that you are being polite?

We really value politeness and good manners in the UK, and there are many types of polite behaviour. One of the first things we learn as children is to say "please" and "thank you". As adults, I think we are careful not to be too direct in the language we use. For example, we would

never say "Bring me the bill" in a restaurant because this kind of direct instruction would sound rude. It would be much more polite to say "Could we have the bill, please?".

Are we less polite with members of our families than with people we don't know?

I suppose it's normal to be a bit more relaxed about politeness with family members. Most people tend to speak in a more informal way at home; in the UK, we still say "please" and "thanks", but it's fine to use colloquial language and things like nicknames that you would never use with someone you didn't know.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: comparing past and present

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, you might be asked to compare the past with the present. The examiner will be listening to your use tenses. For example:

Are there any differences between the types of people who were seen as celebrities in the past and those who are celebrities nowadays?

Yes, I think there have been some big changes in the types of people who become famous. In the past, before the invention of television, I suppose there were very few national or international celebrities; maybe kings and queens, military, political and religious leaders were the only household names. With the advent of TV and radio, performers such as actors and musicians became more well-known. However, we now seem to have a completely new breed of celebrity as a result of 'reality' television programmes; these are people who don't really have any special skills as performers, but who are famous for just being themselves.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: explain, alternative, example

In part 3 of the speaking test, you need to give longer, detailed answers. A good way to do this is by organising your answers according to the following steps:

1. Idea: answer the question directly.
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- 2.Explain: give a reason or explain your answer in more detail.
- 3.Alternative: explain an alternative (e.g. the opposite) to your answer.
- 4.Example: give an example to support your answer.
- 5.Another idea: sometimes you think of another idea while you are speaking. Just add it on the end of your answer.

You can give a really good answer without including all five steps, but you might find it useful to practise including all five, as I've done here:

Why do you think some people prefer to buy products from their own countries rather than imported items?

(idea) I suppose it's because those people want to support the economy of the country they live in. *(explain)* If they buy something that was made in their own country, they know that they are contributing to the salaries of workers within the same country, *(alternative)* whereas if they buy imported items, a foreign company and its employees will benefit. *(example)* For example, if I buy some meat that originates from a local farm rather than a farm in another country, I'm helping one of my fellow citizens to carry on in business. *(another idea)* Also, I think that trust is an issue; people might feel that they can trust domestically produced items more than imported ones.

IELTS Speaking part 3: rivers, lakes, sea

1. What do you think are the functions of rivers nowadays?

Rivers have various functions. In the UK, they were probably more important in the past because they were used for the transportation of goods, but I suppose this is still the case in many parts of the world. Rivers can be used as a source of renewable energy in the production of hydro-electric power, and they are also a source of fresh water for drinking and irrigation. Leisure activities are another function: fishing, canoeing, swimming, bathing... I'm sure there are many other things I haven't thought of.

2. *What do you think of boats and ships as forms of transportation?*

I'm not really a fan of boats and ships. If I'm going abroad, I like to get to my destination quickly, so I prefer travelling by plane. Of course, ships are vital for the transportation of oil and other heavy cargo.

3. *Why do some people like to live near rivers, lakes or the sea?*

Well, the view is probably a major factor; most people like to look out to sea, or across a river or lake. I'd much prefer to look out of my window onto a natural landscape than an apartment building in a city. Then there's the lifestyle: if you live by the sea, for example, you can lie on the beach, go for a swim, or do water sports like surfing or waterskiing. I definitely wouldn't mind living near a beach at some point in my life!

Note:

These answers are less formal than the essays I write for the writing test, and I say things like "probably" or "I suppose" when I'm not sure about the facts.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: competitions

The following questions come from Cambridge IELTS 7. I've underlined some of the good words and phrases in my answers.

1. *Why do you think some school teachers use competitions as class activities?*

I think teachers use competitions to motivate the children in their classes. I'm sure that teachers try all kinds of activities to engage their pupils, and competitions might be one of the best ways to keep children interested or get them excited. Children love winning things.

2. *Is it a good thing to give prizes to children who do well at school? Why?*

It might be a good idea to encourage children to do well in games or sports, but I don't think we should give children prizes for their academic work. Children need to learn that the reason for

studying is to learn useful things that will help them in their lives. I don't like the idea of children thinking that they will only work hard if there is a prize.

3. *Would you say that schools for young children have become more or less competitive since you were that age? Why?*

I'd say that they have become more competitive since I was young. Children now have to take exams from a much younger age, so I think there is more of a focus on doing well in tests. Parents also seem to be getting more competitive; I think that many parents push their children to do extra homework rather than letting them play with friends.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'emotions' topic

The following questions follow on from [this topic](#).

Do you think it's good to show your emotions when you're angry?

I think it depends on the situation and how you show your emotions. I find that if I'm angry with a friend or someone in my family, it's best to tell them what the problem is and try to express how I feel. However, I don't think it helps to argue with people when you're angry; it's better to control the anger and explain what's wrong.

In your opinion, do women show their emotions more than men?

The stereotypical view is that women are more emotional, and in my experience there is some truth in this; my mother, for example, tends to show her feelings much more readily than my father. However, I'm sure that there are exceptions to the stereotype.

Why do you think men tend to show their emotions less than women?

Maybe it's because of the way we are brought up. I think that boys are often taught from an early age not to cry. Also, boys are aware that their friends might see it as a sign of weakness if they show their feelings. Perhaps girls are brought up to be more sensitive to their friends' feelings.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: leisure activities

Here are some questions that a student sent me, with example answers below.

1. What is the relationship between leisure and the economy?

Well, people spend a lot of money on all sorts of leisure activities nowadays, so I think leisure is a very important part of the economy of most countries. Leisure could be anything that people do in their free time, such as eating out, going to the cinema, watching a football match, or staying in a hotel. Millions of people are employed in these areas.

2. How does the economy benefit from people's leisure activities?

The leisure industry makes a huge contribution to the economy. As I said before, it keeps millions of people in employment, and all of these employees pay their taxes and have money to spend on other goods and services. At the same time, most people spend some of their earnings on leisure activities, and this money therefore goes back into the economy.

3. Do men and women enjoy the same type of leisure activities?

Yes and no. I think both men and women enjoy things like eating in restaurants or going to the cinema, but I'm sure there are other activities that are more popular with one gender. For example, I think more men than women go to football matches.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'parties' topic

In part 2 of the speaking test you might be asked to [describe a party](#). Here are some part 3 questions that could follow that topic:

1. What types of party do people have, and why are parties important?

People have parties to celebrate special occasions like birthdays, weddings, or the beginning of a new year. I think it's important to celebrate these things because they are landmarks in our lives. Parties are a good way to bring people together, and they're an opportunity to [let off some steam](#).

2. Why do you think some people like parties but others hate them?

Most people like parties because they have a good time at them - eating a nice meal, chatting to friends, or having a dance. People who don't like them might find social situations difficult because they are shy, or maybe they don't enjoy having to make small talk with people they don't know.

3. Do you think parties will become more popular in the future?

No, I don't think anything will change. People have always had parties, and I'm sure they always will in the future. Humans need to socialise and enjoy themselves, and parties are one of the best ways to do that.

PS. I've underlined the band 7-9 phrases.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'wildlife' topic

Here are some Part 3 questions and band 9 answers for this topic. I've underlined the 'band 7-9' vocabulary.

What effects do you think humans have on wild animals?

Humans have a huge impact on wild animals. We have destroyed a lot of natural habitats, and many animals are in danger of extinction. Tigers and rhinos, for example, are endangered species because of humans. The pollution and waste that we produce also have an effect on animals. In some places there are no fish in the rivers.

What measures could we take to protect wildlife?

I think we need stricter rules to protect natural areas and the wild animals that live there. For example, we should stop cutting down trees in the rain forest. National parks are a good idea because they attract tourists while protecting wildlife.

Is it the responsibility of schools to teach children about protecting wildlife?

Yes, schools can play a big part in educating children about this issue. Children should learn how to look after the natural environment. I think schools already teach children about endangered

species and the destruction of rain forests, so hopefully future generations will do a better job of protecting wildlife.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: sports

In the example answers below, I've underlined some of the phrases that examiners would like. They might seem easy to understand, but they are the kind of natural phrases that native speakers use. My answers are at band 9 level.

1. Why do you think sport is important?

I think sport is important for different reasons. For me, doing a sport is about having fun. When I play football, for example, I forget about everything else and just enjoy myself. Also, doing a sport helps you to keep fit and healthy, and it's a good way to socialise and make friends.

2. Do you think famous sportspeople are good role models for children?

I think that sportspeople should be good role models. Children look up to their favourite football players, like David Beckham for example, so I think that these people have an enormous responsibility. They should try to be a good influence, and behave in the right way.

3. Do you agree that sports stars earn too much money?

In my opinion, it's fair that the best sportspeople earn a lot of money. Being a top sportsperson requires hours of practice, and there are millions of sports fans who are willing to pay to see them play. If we don't want sportspeople to earn so much money, we shouldn't go to watch them.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'lessons' topic

The following answers are at 'band 9' level. Which words and phrases help my answers to get such a high score?

1. What do you think makes a good lesson?

I think a good lesson is one that is interesting and engaging. By 'engaging' I mean that the students should feel involved in the lesson; they should feel that they are learning something new that is relevant to them. In my opinion, a lot depends on how the teacher delivers the content of the lesson in a way that students like. My favourite teacher at university used to involve the students by making us teach some of the lessons ourselves.

2. Do you think it's better to have a teacher or to teach yourself?

Well, there's no substitute for a good teacher. I think you can teach yourself, but you can learn a lot more quickly with the guidance of a teacher. For example, when learning a language, you really need someone to correct your mistakes; you can get the grammar and vocabulary from books, but books can't tell you where you're going wrong.

3. Do you think the traditional classroom will disappear in the future?

I don't think it will disappear, but it might become less common. I think more people will study independently, using different technologies rather than sitting in a classroom. Maybe students will attend a lesson just once a week, and spend the rest of their time following online courses or watching video lessons.

IELTS Speaking: 'questionnaires' topic

IELTS speaking part 2:

Describe a time when you were asked to give your opinion in a questionnaire.

Advice: Say that you were given a questionnaire at the end of one of your school or university courses. Say that the questions asked for your opinions about the teaching, materials, facilities, level of difficulty, how much you enjoyed the course etc.

IELTS speaking part 3:

What kinds of organisation regularly conduct questionnaires?

All kinds of organisations and companies use questionnaires to find out what people think about them. For example, university lecturers often ask their students to answer questions about their courses. Someone from a Starbucks cafe stopped me in the street yesterday to ask me about my coffee drinking habits.

Do you think schools should ask children for their opinions about lessons?

On the one hand, it might be useful for teachers to get feedback from children about how much they learnt and how enjoyable they found the lessons. However, children don't necessarily know what's best for them, and it might do more harm than good to allow them to give opinions about their teachers.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: technology at work

1. What technology or equipment is used in most workplaces nowadays?
2. Does technology help workers, or does it make their lives more difficult?
3. What effect does new technology have on employment?

1. Advice: give a list of different technologies, then talk about one in detail:

In most workplaces people use equipment such as computers, phones, printers, fax machines and photocopiers. I think the computer is probably the most essential piece of equipment because we rely on it for almost everything: communicating by email, writing reports, organising data, and finding information on the Internet.

2. Advice: talk about the positives AND the negatives:

Technology definitely helps workers because it makes many tasks so much easier. For example, email is such a useful tool for communication between employees in different offices, or even in different countries. On the other hand, technology can make life more difficult, especially when it goes wrong. It causes a lot of stress when the Internet is down or a computer crashes.

3. Advice: give the good effects AND the bad effects:

I think technology is often responsible for people losing their jobs. Machines have replaced people in areas like manufacturing and agriculture, and whenever a new technology is introduced, there are redundancies. At the same time, jobs might be created thanks to a new technology; there would be no computer programmers if the computer hadn't been invented.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: How will the Internet affect our lives?

The "perspectives technique" for generating ideas (see 6th October) can also be useful in the IELTS speaking test. Here's an example:

How do you think the Internet will affect our lives in the future?

Personal perspective:

I think the Internet will have a huge impact on our lives. More and more people are using social websites to keep in touch with friends. I think the Internet will probably replace TV because most channels are already available online.

Economic perspective:

Also, I think we'll do more online shopping. Web-based companies like Amazon are already really successful. In the future, there will probably be more companies that only sell via the Internet, and I expect we'll spend more money online than in traditional shops.

Educational perspective:

Schools and universities might also use the Internet to provide courses, so online learning will probably become a normal part of life.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: idea, explain, personal example

Let's look at a sample answer using the "idea, explain, example" structure. This time I'm using a *personal* example in the last sentence.

What disagreements do teenagers often have with their parents? Why?

(Idea / basic answer) Teenagers disagree with their parents about all sorts of things, like the clothes they want to wear, whether they can go out with their friends, doing homework, and how much help they give their parents around the house. (Explain why) I think the teenage years are when we develop a sense of identity, and we want to make our own decisions rather than follow other people's instructions. (Personal example) I remember having disagreements with my own parents, usually about simple things like getting up early in the morning, tidying my room, or doing the washing up!

IELTS Speaking Part 3: status symbols

In part 3 of the IELTS speaking test you should try to give longer answers with opinions, reasons, comparisons and examples. Here are some example questions and answers related to last week's part 2 topic:

In your country, what possessions show a higher status or position in society?

In my country, people who are wealthy tend to buy big houses and cars. Certain makes of car such as Mercedes or Ferrari are status symbols. They let other people know that you are important or powerful. People who want to give this impression often wear expensive designer clothes, or watches by brands like Rolex.

Do you think we place too much importance on possessions?

Probably, yes. Some people are obsessed with showing off their new mobile phone or wearing the latest fashions. I think it's a problem for teenagers because there's a lot of peer pressure to follow fashion or buy the latest gadget that their friends have got.

Do you think things were different 50 years ago?

Yes, maybe people were less materialistic. I think they bought things that lasted longer; my grandparents talk about how they repaired things rather than throwing them away. Maybe brands and advertising weren't as powerful as they are now.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: children's toys

Here are some questions related to last week's part 2 topic:

1. Do you think it's important for boys to play with "boys' toys" and for girls to only play with "girls' toys"?

I think boys naturally seem to prefer playing with "boys' toys" and girls with "girls' toys". When I was young I had toy cars, trucks, guns and things like that, whereas my sister always wanted to play with dolls. I don't suppose it really matters if a boy plays with a doll or a girl plays with a toy car, but children learn quickly what toys are supposed to be for boys and for girls.

2. Do you think it's good if parents only buy "educational" toys for their children?

No, I don't agree with only giving children educational toys. In my opinion, children learn by playing with whatever interests them. Children invent their own games, even if they don't have any toys at all. It's important for children just to have fun; there will be plenty of time for parents to worry about education when their children get older.

VOCABULARY

IELTS Vocabulary: band 7-9 phrases

Let's review the vocabulary. Here are the phrases that I think would impress an examiner:

- volunteer to run activity clubs
- help out (phrasal verb)
- residential homes for elderly people
- support people living below the poverty line
- there isn't a scale of importance when it comes to helping others
- all forms of help are positive
- experience difficult times
- run the risk of losing our jobs
- people help others because they empathise with them
- It's impossible to generalise about...
- from one generation to the next
- judge or compare how altruistic people are

IELTS Vocabulary: less common alternatives

Let's look at some of the vocabulary alternatives. The alternatives on the right are a bit less common, and might impress the examiner if you used them.

1. *with three bedrooms* = a three-bedroomed house

2. *in a suburb of Manchester* = on the outskirts of Manchester

3. *relax* = unwind, put my feet up, wind down

4. *it needs a new kitchen* = it could do with a new kitchen

Note:

"could do with" is an informal way of saying "need" e.g. I could do with a drink, I could do with some help, I could do with another few days to finish this project.

IELTS Advice: topic research

If you're preparing for a writing or speaking topic, I recommend doing an Internet search for ideas first.

To find ideas for speaking questions, I typed the phrase "what makes a good adviser" into Google, and found [this webpage](#). Look at some of the great language that we can steal from it:

- turning to an adviser
- a wise choice
- make decisions with more confidence
- the decision requires expertise
- use knowledge and experience
- make an informed decision
- some qualities are characteristic of good advisers
- trustworthy, someone you can trust
- possesses a strong base of knowledge

Remember: the key to high speaking and writing scores is good vocabulary, so topic research is a vital part of your IELTS preparation.

IELTS Vocabulary: nice bits of language!

There were a few nice bits of language :

- all sorts of things
- a certain amount of
- I pick up a newspaper most days
- I usually have a book on the go
- I couldn't put it down
- opens the door to all aspects of education

These phrases made my answers sound very natural and "native-speaker-like". Try using them in your own sentences.

IELTS Vocabulary: for your notebook

Have you written good vocabulary in your notebook? Here are the words and phrases that I think you should note down:

- took place a few years ago
 - where I grew up
 - the marriage ceremony was held in a church
 - the wedding reception
 - members of my family
 - the bride and groom
 - my mother made sure that...
 - we all dressed for the occasion
-

- and so on (instead of "etc.")
- her big day
- we had a fantastic time
- it's rare for me to see
- what made the day so memorable

IELTS Vocabulary: band 7-9 phrases

There was some good vocabulary for speaking. [Here's a list](#) of the phrases that I think would impress an examiner:

- it was great to share that experience
- The positive experience wasn't confined to one particular place
- As far as I remember
- visits to various tourist attractions
- one of my first memories was
- a group of close friends
- which made the experience more enjoyable
- What really struck me about London was
- historic but modern and thriving at the same time
- a lively, fashionable and cosmopolitan place
- Coming from a relatively small town
- the experience made me keen to visit more capital cities

IELTS Speaking: if you don't understand

What should you do if you don't understand a question in the speaking test? Here are my tips:

Part 1

In part 1, the examiner is not allowed to help you, but he/she can repeat the question. Just say: "Sorry, can you repeat the question please?" If you still don't understand the second time, try to say something related to the topic or any of the words that you heard. Try your best, then focus on the next question.

Part 2

You are given a task card with the question written on it, so you shouldn't have any problems in this part. If there is a word that you don't understand on the task card, don't ask the examiner - he/she is not allowed to help.

Part 3

In this part of the test, the examiner is allowed to rephrase the question. If you don't understand, just say something like: "Sorry, can you explain that question in a different way please?"

IELTS Vocabulary: band 7-9 descriptions

Here are some suggestions for ways to improve the sentences in [yesterday's](#) exercise:

1. The clock is very old.

= The clock is an antique; it's probably a collector's item.

2. It is big and made of wood.

= It is housed in a large wooden cabinet that stands nearly two metres tall.

3. It has been in my family for a long time.

= It has been in my family for several generations.

4. Everyone in my family likes the clock.

= We've all become quite attached to the clock; it's like part of the family.

5. I hope my parents will give it to me one day.

= The clock is a real family heirloom, so hopefully I'll inherit it one day

IELTS Vocabulary: good phrases

Looking back many good phrases can be used. Try making your own sentences with the phrases below. Check to see how I used them before you write anything.

- caught my eye
- out of curiosity
- I ended up (+ing)
- dedicated to
- I hadn't intended to.....
- approached me
- I wondered what..... were
- the various..... on show
- I found..... fascinating
- he had a passion for.....
- he didn't mind (+ing)
- I had made it clear that.....

IELTS Speaking Part 2: noticing good language

Good vocabulary:

- it has its limitations
- the bride and groom and their guests celebrating
- capture longer range photos
- photos in darker conditions
- capture a special occasion
- higher quality images
- depends on whether
- I'll achieve that goal by experimenting
- learning as I go along

Grammar and coherence:

- Variety of tenses and verb forms: I'm going to talk about, I'm using, I've realised, I thought, I'll talk, I did notice, I'd like to, before making, I'll achieve... if I can... (conditional)
- Linking and organising: which, at the moment, but, a few weeks ago, next time, obviously, this plan (referring back to a previous idea), also, in terms of
- No mistakes!

Read my [description](#) again and highlight the words and phrases above. Hopefully you'll see why an examiner would give it a band 9.

IELTS Vocabulary

Here are some band 7-9 phrases from [Friday's lesson](#):

- a typical winter would last...
- when I say..., I'm really thinking about...
- wintry months
- the temperature drops below zero
- we've had periods of quite heavy snowfall
- to the extent that...
- roads have been blocked and schools have had to close
- everything covered in a layer of white
- the snow is what differentiates winter from the other seasons
- the landscape looks beautiful

IELTS Speaking: useful expressions

I want to draw your attention to a few useful expressions that used before. _____
answers. Maybe you could try using them in your own answers.

1. An alternative way to say "and":

- Just as individuals can learn from their mistakes, societies can (also)...
- Just as we need to exercise the body, we also need to exercise the mind.

2. A nice way to introduce a personal example or opinion:

- From what I've read in the newspapers,...
- From what I've heard / seen / experienced,...

3. Giving an opinion when you're not sure:

- If I had to guess what might happen in the future, I'd like to think that...
-

- If I had to give my opinion, I'd say...

IELTS Speaking: verb tenses and vocabulary

In yesterday's lesson I asked you to find examples of verb tenses and good vocabulary in my sample answer about a film that I would like to see.

Here are examples of different verb tenses that I used:

- Future with 'going to': it's going to be called Spectre
- Future with 'will': I don't know exactly what it will be about
- Present simple for the future: when it comes out later this year
- Present simple: I think Spectre refers to...
- Present perfect (active): I've seen the official trailer
- Present perfect (passive): hasn't been released yet
- Past simple: I saw in the news
- Past continuous: when I was watching the news

Here are some examples of 'band 7-9' vocabulary:

- when it comes out (meaning: when it is released)
 - refers to the name of
 - the imaginary criminal organisation
 - hasn't been released yet
 - on a mission to save the world
 - an arch-criminal
 - a plot line involving lots of twists and turns
 - to defeat his nemesis
-

- the official trailer
- cast to play supporting roles
- James Bond films are always big news
- action scenes and special effects
- take place in spectacular locations
- unrealistic, you could even say ridiculous
- like a roller-coaster ride

