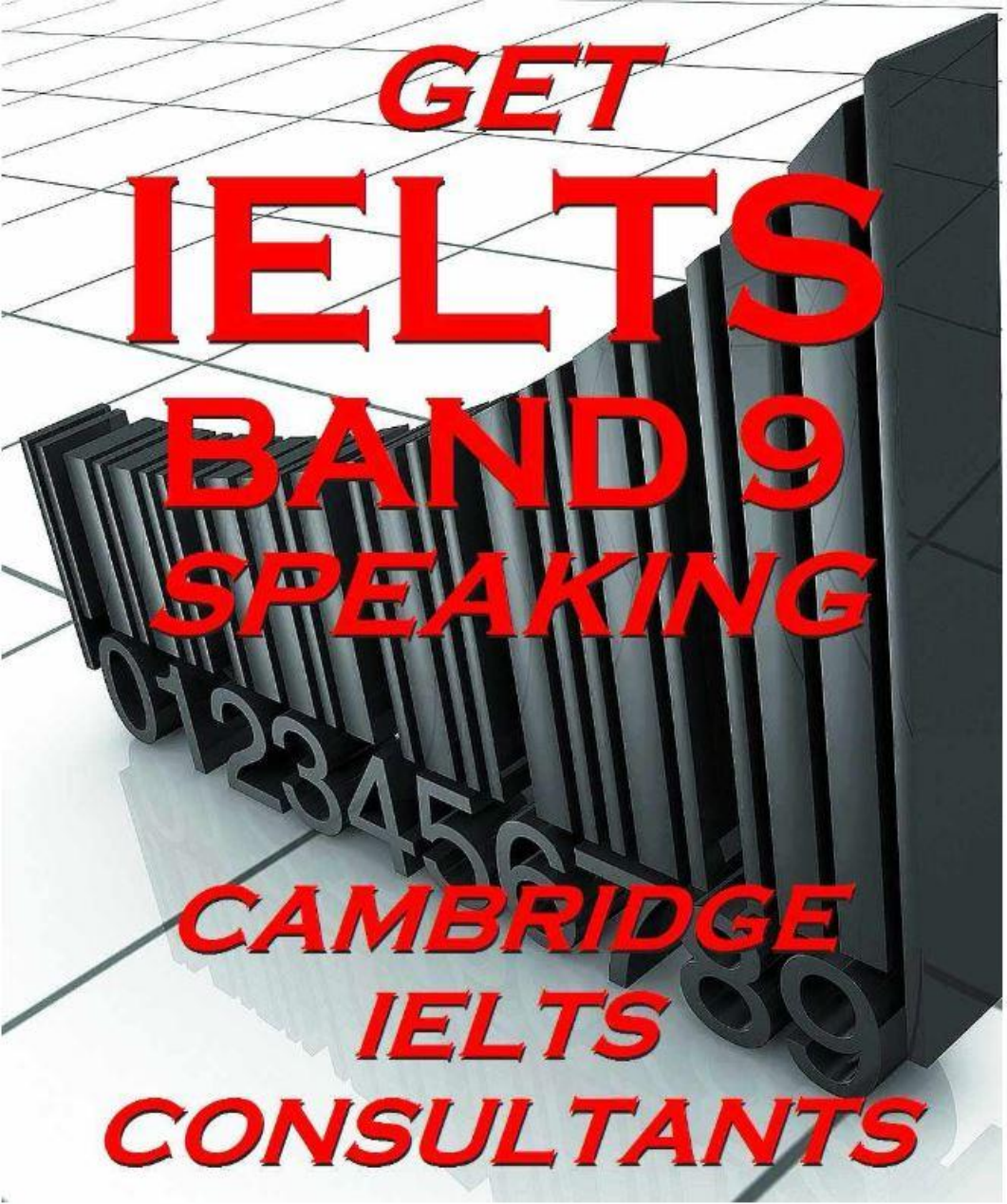
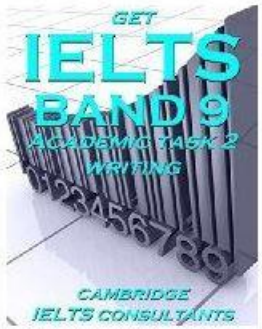

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Introduction from the authors

Many people taking the IELTS exam don't prepare fully for the Speaking Test. This is a great shame, because with help (plus, of course, lots of practice) you can learn some very powerful ways to get the best possible Band score, even if your English has some errors or your vocabulary is limited.

This book is based on our years of experience preparing candidates for the IELTS exam. We have found that by following these methods, a candidate can improve a Band score by up to 3 levels just by improving their test strategies.

This book shows you our proven strategies for each part of the Speaking Test, plus transcripts of candidates giving spoken answers at a Band 9 standard, so you can see what is possible. There are also FAQs on the Speaking Test, and 2 complete practice Speaking Tests for you to use to prepare for the exam.

If you need a dictionary while reading this book, we recommend the free *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* from Cambridge University Press.

Don't just trust to luck in your IELTS exam – the key is expert advice!

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Frequently Asked Questions about the IELTS Speaking Test

What happens in the Speaking Test?

The Speaking Test lasts roughly 11 minutes, and has 3 parts. Strategies for each part are explained fully in this book. You (the candidate) will enter a room where an examiner is sitting at a table; the candidate and the examiner are the only people in the room. Your conversation with the examiner is recorded in order to verify the grade that the examiner gives you. The examiner will check your ID and provide you with paper and a pencil to make notes during Part 2 of the test.

What happens in Part 1?

The examiner will ask you a series of questions about some part of your life, for example your home country or your plans for study and work.

What happens in Part 2?

The examiner gives you a topic to talk about, related to something in your past or present life. You have 1 minute to prepare, and then you need to speak on the topic for between 1 and 2 minutes.

What happens in Part 3?

The examiner will discuss with you a general topic related to the personal topic in Part 2.

How does the examiner mark my speaking?

The examiner is looking for full answers to the questions asked,

using a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. The examiner will expect your answers to be relevant, well-structured and accurate. This is why you need to use the strategies we teach in this book. The examiner will make notes on a pad while you are speaking; don't try to see what the examiner is writing!

What are the examiners like?

IELTS examiners are trained to be friendly, professional and to make you feel comfortable. They are used to candidates being slightly nervous, and they will try to help you relax.

You should try to build a professional rapport with the examiner as soon as you meet him/her. You should smile, say *'Very nice to meet you'* and shake the examiner's hand. You should sit at the table in a professional way, as if you were at a seminar or a meeting, placing your hands in view and leaning slightly forward to maintain eye contact. This might be different from your national culture, but it will show the examiner that you are alert and interested in the test.

How fast should I speak?

Try to speak at a normal professional speed. 'Professional' in this context means the way you would speak in a seminar or business meeting in an English-speaking situation. Please note that this may be slower than the speed you naturally speak when talking in your mother tongue language. Don't get very excited or emotional, or make gestures which could be confusing, such as banging the table with your hand.

Should I speak in a very formal or academic way?

No! Candidates sometimes think that they need to speak in the same way as they would write in the IELTS academic writing test, for example by using words such as *'therefore'* and *'nevertheless.'* In the

speaking test, this is optional, but not necessary. It's more important to use the most advanced and natural English that you can, and organise your answers well.

I speak English with quite a strong accent. Is this a problem?

This is not normally a problem. Many people from English speaking countries have strong local accents. The only problem is if your pronunciation makes it difficult for the examiner to understand your speech.

I make some grammatical mistakes when I speak English? Is this a problem?

If you make a few mistakes and these errors don't stop the examiner understanding you, this is not a major problem. We have seen many cases of candidates who have a strong accent and who make some small grammatical mistakes, who still go on to achieve band 8 or 9 in IELTS Speaking. The problem arises if your errors stop the examiner from understanding what you mean.

Note: In this book, we use contractions (e.g. *don't* for *do not*.) It's absolutely ok to use contractions in the Speaking Test, because this is a normal part of speech in English. We also use exclamation marks (!) in this book. But remember that in the IELTS *Academic Writing Test* you should not use contractions or exclamation marks.

STRATEGIES FOR PART 1 OF THE SPEAKING TEST

In Part 1 (which lasts roughly 3 to 4 minutes) the examiner asks you a series of questions about your life and/or your current situation. These questions may be on a single topic (e.g. your leisure interests) or on a variety of topics (e.g. your leisure interests, your friends and your living accommodation.)

Here is an example of three typical Part 1 questions, and three answers from a candidate who would get a low to medium score (around Band 5):

Examiner: Let's talk about your home country. What is the climate like?

Candidate: **It's hot most of the time. Sometimes there is rain.**

Thank you. What are the main industries?

Making cars and buses. And there are many factories which make plastic things.

I see. And what are the main festivals?

What does 'festival' mean?

It means a special time when communities and families celebrate something.

Oh, ok. Well, our big festival is in summer.

I see.

Please note that the answers from this candidate do not contain any

grammatical mistakes. Also, it is not a problem that the candidate asked for an explanation of the word *'festival.'* The reason that the mark would be quite low is because the information that the candidate provided was too basic, and the candidate did not expand on his initial comment.

How to answer the Part 1 questions using a 2-step process

Now here is an example of the same questions from the same examiner to a different candidate. This candidate would receive a Band 9 score for this part of the test.

Examiner: Let's talk about your home country. What is the climate like?

Candidate: **It's generally hot and humid, although it rains heavily in October. This has a big influence on our way of life and our industries, because work tends to stop in the rainy season.**

Thank you. What are the main industries?

The main industry is the production of cars and buses, which are mostly exported. Plastic items, especially toys, are important exports as well. In fact, we tend to export most of the products that we manufacture.

I see. And what are the main festivals?

Sorry, can you explain what the word 'festival' means?

It means a special time when communities and families celebrate something.

Thanks. Well, our principal festivals are religious, because most people in my country follow the same religion. We have a three day festival in summer, when people exchange gifts. We also have a national independence day in January. On

both festivals, families celebrate together and the shops close for several days. So we need to plan these events carefully, as you can imagine.

In this second example, the candidate was using more advanced vocabulary (*e.g. humid, tend to, exchange.*) This is one reason why the mark would be higher. However, the main reason the Band score is high is because the candidate used a 2-step process to answer the questions.

Let's explain what this means. The candidate said:

It's generally hot and humid, although it rains heavily in October. This has a big influence on our way of life and our industries because work tends to stop in the rainy season.

Here the candidate describes the climate and then gives a second, more general piece of information about the climate, telling us about its *influence.*

The main industry is the production of cars and buses, which are mostly exported. Plastic items, especially toys, are important exports as well. In fact, we tend to export most of the products that we manufacture. Here, the candidate does something similar: he answers the question and then gives a second, more general piece of information, showing that he has thought about the nature of his country's industries.

He does the same thing in the answer to the third question about festivals, with a first piece of information (**our principal festivals are religious . . .**) supported by a further comment (**So we need to plan these events carefully . . .)** showing that he understands the situation.

This is what we call the 2-step process for Part 1. This means that you give an initial piece of information, and then a further, more general piece of information showing that you understand the situation or that you have considered the situation. The answers are roughly 3 sentences in length. You don't need to give more than 3 sentences for a Part 1 answer.

Practising the Part 1 Speaking, and example Band 9 answers

Here are some more examples of Part 1 questions for you to practise. Try to answer the following questions, using the same two-step process. Give an initial answer with one piece of information, and then give another piece of information that shows that you understand the situation you are describing. In the next section of this book, there is a key with two example answers for each of these questions. The first example answer given is a band 5 or 6 answer, and the second one is a Band 9 answer.

But try these examples before you look at the key!

Please tell me about your home town. What do people do in the evenings?

Let's talk about your plans for the future. What kind of career do you want to follow?

Tell me about your family. What do they do?

Tell me about your country's food and dishes.

Where are you living at present?

What do you like to do at weekends?

Key to the Part 1 practise questions

These are not the only possible answers! Each person will have a different content, of course. The important thing is the 2-step structure that the Band 9 candidate uses, compared to the Band 5 or 6 candidate.

Please tell me about your home town. What do people do in the evenings?

Band 5 or 6: People go to the main square and drink coffee.

Band 9: Many people socialise in the main square, especially in the coffee shops. You could say that the main square is the most important social meeting place, because we don't have a beach or any big night clubs, as some other towns do.

Let's talk about your plans for the future. What kind of career do you want to follow?

Band 5 or 6: I want to be a food scientist, maybe for a big company.

Band 9: I plan to be a food scientist, which would mean finishing my degree and joining a large retail company. That's a challenge, but I think that my personal skills are well suited to that type of environment.

Tell me about your family. What do they do?

Band 5 or 6: My parents are teachers. I have a sister, she is a student.

Band 9: My parents are both teachers, they teach engineering and biology. I think they have been a big influence on my sister and me, because my sister is studying technology and I am applying to Australian

universities to study genetics.

Tell me about your country's food and dishes.

Band 5 or 6: Our favourite food is meat. Our national dish is a lamb dish, like curry.

Band 9: We tend to eat a lot of meat, although these days people are trying to eat less meat for health reasons. We have a national dish which is similar to lamb curry, but made in a unique way. Not many people know the recipe, so eating it is always exciting for us.

Where are you living at present?

Band 5 or 6: I'm living with two other students in an apartment.

Band 9: At the moment I'm renting an apartment with two other students, because we want to be close to the campus, and property in that area is actually quite expensive. I'm pleased with the location, because it's very convenient and it's quiet at night.

What do you like to do at weekends?

Band 5 or 6: I play tennis a lot. I go to a club near my house.

Band 9: My main activity these days is playing tennis, as I belong to a club near my house. There are a lot of social activities as well as the tennis itself. To be honest, I enjoy the social side as much as the sport, so I really look forward to weekends.

When reading the above key, please think about the way that the Band 9 candidate answered the questions using the 2-step process. He gave a piece of information, and then another piece of information to show that he understands or is thinking about the situation. Note that the answers are generally 3 sentences. Remember that you don't need an answer in Part 1 that is much longer than about 3 sentences. The examiner

wants to hear you answer as many questions as possible in this part of the test.

Remember that the questions in Part 1 are always about you and your life. You should have some comments ready to give about any aspect of your life, using the 2-step process explained here. Practise with a friend if possible, using the following topics. All of these topics are taken directly from the list of IELTS examiners questions for Part 1.

Your home country – its industries, food and dishes, festivals, climate, geography, education system, media, history, infrastructure and transport arrangements.

(For example *'Let's talk about transport in your country. How do people generally travel around?'*)

Your home town, city or village – its appearance, population, main businesses, education facilities, public amenities, entertainment possibilities, history

(For example *'Regarding your home town, what are the main schools?'*)

Your plans for the future – your planned examinations, work and career, place to live, places you plan to visit, experiences you would like to have.

(For example *'I'm interested in your future plans. Which job would you like to do? Are there any special exams you will need to pass?'*)

Your family and friends – the jobs that your relatives and friends do, what you like to do when you are with your family or friends, how you keep in touch with your family or friends, your best friend's situation

(For example *'Let's discuss your friends. What do you generally do*

together when you meet them?')

Your personal interests – your taste in music, sport, entertainment, art, ways to relax and exercise, food and cooking

(For example *'Let's talk about sport. What sports or games are you interested in? Which sports do you play?')*

Concluding Part 1

At the end of Part 1 (after about 3 to 4 minutes) the examiner will say *'That's the end of Part 1. Now we're moving on to Part 2 of the test'* or something similar. You should smile and wait for the instructions for Part 2. Don't worry if you think you have made some mistakes in Part 1. Stay positive and try to relax; the examiner will help you feel at ease.

STRATEGIES FOR PART 2 OF THE SPEAKING TEST

In Part 2 (which lasts roughly 3 to 4 minutes) the examiner will give you a card which has a topic task for you to talk about. The topic will be about something in your life, past or present. There will also be some brief task instructions on the card. You will have one minute to think about the topic and make some brief notes. The examiner will give you a pen and paper to make these notes. After your 1 minute preparation, the examiner will ask you to speak for between 1 and 2 minutes on the topic. When you finish, the examiner will ask 1 or 2 short questions about what you have said.

Here are 2 different examples of a Part 2 topic task card:

Describe a holiday or trip that you remember well
Say when and where this was
What you did
Who you went there with
And say why you remember this holiday or trip so well.

Describe a time when you entered a race or competition
Say when and where this was
What the race or competition involved
What happened at the end of it
And say how you felt about this at the time

The above examples are about something in your past life. It is also possible that the topic will be about something in your present life now. Here are 2 examples about your present life:

Describe a building or a place you like to visit regularly.
Say what this building or place is
Where it is
What you do when you go there
And say why you visit it regularly

Describe a friend that you are in contact with often
Say who this person is
How you became friends
How you make contact with him/her
And say why you are often in contact with this person

In the test, check that you understand whether the task instructions are about past or present situations. You will lose marks if you confuse the past and present.

Note that these Part 2 topic tasks are always general, simple subjects about your life past or present. The topics will never ask about such subjects as your politics, religion or sensitive aspects of your life such as family problems. If for some reason you find the topic embarrassing, you can say so and ask for another topic, saying for example *'I'm sorry, I find it awkward to talk about my childhood. Could I please have a different topic?'* The examiner will cooperate with you if this seems really necessary.

How to answer the Part 2 topic task

You should use your 1 minute to prepare notes on what to say. You will see that the topic card always contains a general heading and then 4 points for you to talk about, for example, *when, where, who and why* or *when, what, how and how you felt*.

In your 1 minute preparation, you should make brief notes about the general heading and about each of these 4 points. Use the paper and pen that the examiner gives you. Don't worry about writing neatly, because this paper is destroyed at the end of the test. You don't need to write sentences, just write a few words to help you remember what to say on each point. Write in English, not your other language, because this will help to organise your ideas in English.

Here's an example. For the first topic we saw above, here is the topic task card again:

Describe a holiday or trip that you remember well *(general heading)*
Say when and where this was *(point 1)*
What you did *(point 2)*
Who you went there with *(point 3)*
And say why you remember this holiday or trip so well *(point 4)*

Now, here are some notes made on the paper by a successful candidate during the 1 minute preparation time:

Describe a holiday or trip that you remember well *MY TRIP TO PARIS*

Say when and where this was *2004, summer, school holidays,*

end of my primary school years

What you did *we saw Paris, Eiffel Tower, lots of cafes and museums, river boats*

Who you went there with *School friends and 2 teachers, best friend spoke French*

And say why you remember this holiday or trip so well *End of primary, lots of fun, also sad, very hot, teacher broke his arm*

This example is probably the maximum amount that you can make in the 1 minute preparation – but it's enough! The reason for making these notes is to prepare your mind for the Part 2 speaking, to make sure that you cover each of the 4 points in the topic task, and to show the examiner that you can use notes to help you organise ideas.

How to use these notes while speaking in Part 2

In Part 2, the task instructions tell you to speak for between 1 and 2 minutes. You should try to speak for about 2 minutes. This gives you the maximum chance to demonstrate your speaking ability to the examiner. In reality, if you aim to speak for 2 minutes, you will probably speak for slightly less time. But if you only aim to speak for 1 minute, you may speak for less than that, and so you would be below the minimum speaking time.

When you start speaking, you should begin by saying *'I'm going to talk about . . .'* or similar, and then paraphrase the notes you made about the general topic heading.

You should speak for roughly 30 seconds on each of the 4 points you have made notes about in your preparation. The strategy is that 4

points x roughly 30 seconds each = roughly 2 minutes of speaking, which is the maximum required. Use this strategy to make sure your speaking is roughly balanced across the 4 points, and so that you reach the 2 minutes. It doesn't matter if you speak for a bit less or more than 30 seconds on each of the individual points. Try to make each point as natural as possible.

While speaking, you should maintain eye contact with the examiner, and glance *occasionally* at your notes to make sure that you are covering all the ideas that you noted. You should also glance *occasionally* at your watch to make sure that you are speaking for 30 seconds on each of the 4 points. Remember, the majority of your eye contact should be with the examiner. If you wish, you can *occasionally* mark the notes on the paper, for example by ticking them with the pencil, as you talk about them. Provided that you keep speaking naturally, and maintain eye contact, the examiner will not mind this.

Note that we emphasise the word *occasionally!* This is because if you *constantly* look at your watch or mark the notes, the examiner will ask you not to do it. You will need a lot of practice to be able to talk naturally for 2 minutes on these topic tasks, using notes and a watch. Even for a native speaker of English, this is quite a difficult thing to do.

Band 9 example of Part 2 speaking

Here is the transcript of a candidate speaking for 2 minutes about the 'holiday or trip' topic task shown above in the previous section. Note how the candidate introduces the general topic, and then speaks about each of the 4 points in the topic task instructions, using the ideas in his preparation notes to guide the answer.

We have added the relevant parts of the topic task **in bold** so that

you can see the structure of the answer. When speaking, you should not read directly from the topic card, but you can paraphrase some of the task instructions, as this candidate does for point 3.

(Describe a holiday or trip that you remember well) 'I'm going to talk about a trip that I remember very well, which was a holiday in Paris, the capital of France.' (**Say when and where this was)** 'This happened in 2004, in August, so it was right in the middle of the school holidays. In fact, at that time I was eleven years old, and I had just finished my primary school education, so the trip was actually organised by my primary school as a way of marking the end of our studies and the fact that we were going on to secondary school. It was a memorable trip for lots of reasons.'

(What you did) 'We knew that Paris was a famous city, and of course we quickly saw all the most important tourist sights such as the Eiffel Tower, which was very impressive and gave us an amazing panoramic view from the platform at the top. We also went on trips on the river boats, which gave us a long tour of the city along the banks of the river, and let us see the people of Paris doing their daily jobs such as running shops and cafes. But we also spent a lot of time in the many museums, especially the art museums, and we went to a huge range of cafes and restaurants in the evenings. Personally, I found those evenings just as interesting as the big tourist attractions, because we could relax and listen to people speaking French, and we could practice ordering snacks and refreshments in French. This was tricky at first, but we soon became more confident.'

(Who you went there with) 'Who did I travel there with? Well, I went with a group of classmates, in particular my best friend at the time, who spoke French quite well and so was a big help in getting around. In fact, he enjoyed showing off and impressing people with his French, which

surprised the local people because not many visitors speak the language. We also had 2 of our primary teachers, who escorted us around and arranged the excursions and so on. The teachers were kept very busy, but they always stayed positive, and they told us a great deal about the city and its history, which we enjoyed.'

(And say why you remember this holiday or trip so well)

'The reason I remember this trip so vividly is partly because it was very enjoyable, and my first experience of staying in another country for more than a few hours. I remember being nervous and then starting to enjoy all the new things we saw. At the same time, unfortunately, we all felt a bit sad because we knew that our primary years were finished and we all knew that secondary school would be harder and more demanding for us. I also remember that the weather was extremely hot, especially on the subway and inside the buildings during the day, because nobody in Paris seemed to have air conditioning! I remember thinking that it was really strange for such a modern country not to have proper cooling systems.

One other reason why I remember this holiday was because one of my teachers had an accident. He was walking down the steps outside a museum when it was raining heavily, and he slipped over on the wet stone and broke his arm. He had to go to hospital and have emergency treatment, and I remember thinking he was very brave after that to continue escorting us pupils around with a broken arm in such hot weather. I don't think I would have been so brave and so patient!'

(This candidate spoke for approximately 1 minute 55 seconds)

<u>Important things to consider about Part 2</u>

Look again at the topic instruction card for this 'holiday or trip'

example, and see how the candidate is careful to answer the 4 different parts of the task (**When, what, who, why**) using the preparation notes.

Note that this candidate does not use very formal or technical vocabulary, apart from phrases that any educated English speaker would use (*e.g. 'panoramic view, excursions, demanding.'*) Remember that in the Speaking Test you don't need to use the academic vocabulary which is necessary in IELTS Academic Writing. It is more important that the speaking Part 2 answer is clearly structured, the descriptions are relevant to the task and clear, and the content of the answer is credible.

If you can't remember enough about an aspect of your life for this task, you can invent some details. For example, it's possible that our candidate invented the description of the teacher breaking his arm. If you invent details, you must make them credible and relevant. Don't invent things which are comical or tragic, because this would be too obvious. For example, 'my teacher broke his arm' is credible. 'My teacher was kidnapped by the mafia' is not really credible.

Your Part 2 answer must avoid padding. 'Padding' means saying unnecessary things or giving long lists just to make your answer longer. For example, if the candidate gave a long list of the French places he saw (e.g. *'I remember that we saw the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Seine, the Moulin Rouge, Orly airport, the Champs Elysee and the Montmartre district'*) or if he gave a list of all the names and ages of his friends, this would be seen as padding. The examiner will immediately start to reduce your mark if you seem to be padding your answer.

Practising Part 2 Speaking

Now try these topic tasks as a practice. For each task, work with a friend or another student. Spend 1 minute making notes on the 4 points in the topic, and then try to speak for about 30 seconds on each point,

referring to your notes to help you remember your ideas, so that your total answer is roughly 2 minutes. Start by saying *'I'm going to talk about . . .'* Remember to maintain eye contact with your friend and to check your watch and notes *occasionally* to see how the time is progressing.

Describe a meal or party that you attended.
Say when this was
Who was present
Why the meal or party was organised
And say what you did while you were there

Describe a journey that you make regularly
Say where you go
How you travel
Why you make this journey
And say what you do when you arrive at your destination

Describe a natural place you have visited or seen
Say where this is
What the place is like
When you visited or saw it
And say why you remember this place

Describe an event you remember from your time at school
Say how old you were
What happened
Who was involved
And say why you still remember this event

<u>After your 2 minute speaking in the Test</u>

In the Test, if you speak for between 1 and 2 minutes, the examiner will thank you and ask 1 or 2 simple questions about what you have said. (For example *'Thank you. Would you recommend Paris as a destination?'* or *'Thank you. What do you remember of the art museums?'*) You should give a brief 2-step answer similar to the answers in Part 1. For example:

'Thank you. Would you recommend Paris as a destination?'

Yes, I would recommend it. It's a very busy city, but there is a lot to see for people of all interests and all ages, even though there's no air conditioning.'

'Thank you. What do you remember of the art museums?'

'Well, I remember that one museum had the famous painting of the Mona Lisa. It was so popular that it was difficult to see the picture because of all the other tourists in the room, which was a shame because I really wanted to see it.'

If you speak for 2 minutes, the examiner will ask you to stop speaking at the 2 minute mark, and then ask 1 or 2 questions as described above. The examiner will not let you speak for more than 2 minutes.

If for some reason you speak for less than 1 minute, the examiner will ask you to speak for longer, so that you follow the instructions in the topic task. The examiner will then ask 1 or 2 questions as described above.

When this process is finished, the examiner will say *'That completes Part 2 of the test. Now we'll move on to Part 3'* or something similar, and then take back the task card. You should smile and wait for the next question to begin Part 3.

STRATEGIES FOR PART 3 OF THE SPEAKING TEST

Part 3 (which lasts for roughly 4 minutes) is a discussion between you and the examiner. The topic will be related to the topic you just spoke about in Part 2, but the questions will be about society in general, *not* about your life in particular. For example, if the topic in Part 2 was your memory of a holiday or trip, the topic in Part 3 may be about people's holidays or about travel in general. Here are some more examples of Part 2 *personal* topics and the possible Part 3 *general* discussion topics related to them:

Part 2 personal topic	*Possible Part 3 discussion topic*
Your best friend	Communicating with friends
A time when you worked in a team	Schools and teamwork
Your plans for a future career	Education and work
Something you bought	Retail and shopping
A journey you make often	Changes in transport

Note that the Part 3 topics are about people and society, *not* about you personally.

The different types of question in Part 3

When Part 3 begins, the examiner will introduce the topic by saying, for example, *'Now we're going to discuss education and work'* or something similar. The examiner will then ask you a series of questions connected to the topic.

Some of these questions will be about your *opinion* of the topic (for example *'Do you think that young people should have detailed career plans?'*)

Other questions will ask you to suggest some *ideas* on the topic (for example, *'How can schools prepare students for work?'*)

It's very important to answer these different types of question in the appropriate way.

Answering Part 3 'opinion' questions

Here are examples of some 'opinion' type part 3 questions, plus Band 9 answers, on the topic of 'education and work':

Examiner: *Do you think that young people should have detailed career plans?*

Candidate: 'In some ways, yes, this is important. For example, pupils should think about careers when they choose their exam courses, in addition to what interests them. But on the other hand, it's difficult to have very precise plans at a young age, because people and opportunities change rapidly. Overall, I would say that general intentions are useful, but

very detailed career plans are not really relevant.'

Do you think that teachers should use the Internet as part of school lessons?

'I think that this can be useful, for example to show the pupils videos or media reports on subjects they are studying. This helps bring a subject to life. On the other hand, though, I wouldn't want a teacher to be constantly searching or referring to Internet materials during lessons, because it would be distracting or confusing. So I think that well-chosen Internet resources can be a benefit if used carefully.'

Is it useful to have a gap year between school and university?

'Well, a gap year could be useful for some people, for example to help them learn about work or to get experience of other cultures. What's more, if a student does charity work during a gap year, that's a very positive thing for the person and for society. But there are also examples of young people wasting time on gap years, or even having accidents or getting involved in crime. In general, I think these years can only be useful if they are planned structured properly.'

Think about how the candidate structures the answers to the 'opinion' type questions. The candidate answers by firstly considering some different sides of the question, and then giving a personal view at the end. This is the best way to answer an 'opinion' type question in Part 3. Remember to consider some different aspects of the question, and then give a calm, logical opinion at the end. Don't be emotional or dramatic, and don't make jokes about the topic.

Note also that these answers are longer than the Part 1 answers. Part 3 answers are ideally about 4 or 5 sentences long. They might be longer if you know a lot about the topic or if you can think of a lot of points

to discuss.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer in these Part 3 questions. The examiner will not mark you on your opinion itself, but on the way you present your opinion in a balanced, effective way. For example, it doesn't matter if you think that gap years are a good thing or a bad thing. What matters is that you discuss the different aspects and then reach a logical conclusion.

Answering Part 3 'ideas' questions

Remember that we said there is another type of question in Part 3, which is an 'ideas' type question. In these questions, the examiner is not asking your opinion, but is asking you to suggest some ideas, which will usually be usually the reasons for a situation, the solutions to a problem or some ways of achieving something.

Here are examples of some 'ideas' type Part 3 questions plus Band 9 answers, on the same topic of 'education and work':

Examiner: *How can schools prepare students for work?*

Candidate: 'There are several ways that schools can do this. To start with, they can include examples of work and careers in their lessons, so if the subject is chemistry they could study the career of a successful chemist, for example. Schools could also send pupils on visits to workplaces, to offices or factories, so that the young people can see workers doing their jobs. Another thing they could do, for older pupils, is to organise work experience so that students actually try doing a real job for a few hours or days. I think that all these things together would certainly help to prepare young people for work.'

What can teachers use the Internet for in lessons?

'I can think of two main uses for the Internet in classrooms. One is to show examples of videos or audio material which let students see a subject in real life. For example, if a class is studying volcanoes, the teacher could show different types of volcano around the world, which would be interesting. Another way would be to let pupils search for information themselves, for example to research the effect of volcanoes on human populations in history, and then report back to the class. Of course, this would have to be managed closely by the teacher.'

Unemployment among young people is a major problem in many countries. Can you suggest any solutions?

'Well, I suppose the main solution would be to improve education standards among the young people, by spending more on schools and universities. This would help people find jobs, and hopefully the jobs would be better paid as well. Another step would be to encourage employers to hire more young people, by subsidising their salaries or offering tax breaks to make employing them more affordable. I also think that some countries could reduce unemployment benefits to young people, to stop them living on welfare instead of working. These things are difficult to do, and they might be rather unpopular, but I feel that they would certainly work.'

Why do some young people want to become teachers?

'I imagine the biggest reason is having an interest in helping children to develop, by teaching them useful knowledge and skills. There is probably also a desire to share an interest in a specific subject, and to expand the knowledge of this subject in society generally. For example, music teachers are very enthusiastic about music and they want more people to appreciate it. And finally, I think that for some people there's also a third reason, which is an urge to be a positive role model for

youngsters.'

Note that in these examples, the candidate is *not* giving a personal *opinion* (e.g. saying if something is good or bad, useful or not useful) because the question doesn't ask for that. The candidate is quickly thinking of two or three *ideas* on the topic, and explaining them in a logical way.

This is the best way to answer 'ideas' questions in Part 3. Listen carefully to the question, think of 2 or 3 relevant ideas, and explain why they are relevant to the question. If you can think of some examples to support the ideas (e.g. the example of 'music teachers' above) that's good, but remember not to give personal stories or personal information in Part 3. Remember: Part 1 and Part 2 are about you *personally*; but Part 3 is about your opinions and ideas on society *generally*.

As with the 'opinion' type of Part 3 questions, there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer. For example, the examiner isn't expecting you to have a certain type of suggestion about why people become teachers, and it doesn't matter if the examiner agrees with personally you or not. The important thing is the quality of the answer you give.

You must be ready to answer a combination of 'opinion' and 'ideas' questions in part 3, because the examiner will ask you both types of question. For example, the examiner may ask an 'opinion' question and then an 'ideas' question and so on, in any sequence.

The examiner will also react to things you say, for example by saying *'That's interesting, can you tell me more?'* or *'I see, but what about the negative aspect?'* or similar things. This is because Part 3 is intended to be a realistic discussion, where one comment leads to further comments. However, don't try to ask the examiner for his/her views or ideas. Don't say '*What do you think?*' or '*Can you think of anything else?*'

The examiner will not respond to this, and you will be losing valuable time.

Practising the Part 3 questions

Now here are some more examples of part 3 questions, on the topic of 'shops and shopping.' For each question, try to decide quickly if the question is an 'opinion' or an 'ideas' question, and then give an answer in at least 4 or 5 sentences as you saw in the examples above. In the next section of this book, there is a key and examples of Band 9 answers to these questions.

Which are better, small local shops or big supermarkets?

How do stores persuade people to spend money?

Should we allow advertising aimed at children?

Why do people like shopping during sale or promotion periods?

What are the advantages of Internet shopping? Are there any possible disadvantages or risks?

Should all shops have facilities for disabled people?

Continue to the next section for the key.

Key to Part 3 questions with Band 9 model answers

Which are better, small local shops or big supermarkets? (Opinion question)

'I think it depends on your needs. For example, for elderly people, or if someone doesn't have a car, local shops are probably more convenient, and the personal service might also be better. On the other hand, though, large supermarkets are cheaper and offer a much bigger range of products to choose from. Overall, I think that for most people the supermarkets are probably the best option.'

How do stores persuade people to spend money? (Ideas question)

'They use a variety of methods. They often use promotions which make people buy more, for example '3 for the price of 2' and so on. These offers are usually backed up with advertising, whether on TV, the Internet or in the shop itself, and the advertising emphasises both the quality of the product and the money saving. There is another method too, which is to display the products in an attractive way that encourages shoppers to pick them up and look at them. When they're used together, I think these techniques can be very powerful indeed, and very effective at persuading the public to spend more.'

Should we allow TV advertising aimed at children? (Opinion question)

'Well, on the one hand, companies should be free to communicate with their customers, and that includes children. We also sometimes forget that children love TV commercials for all the excitement and humour. But on the other hand, children don't have the ability to judge or choose in the way that adults do, and adverts can exploit this. So generally

speaking, I think we should allow these adverts, provided they're carefully regulated and controlled by the authorities.'

Why do people like shopping during sale or promotion periods? (Ideas question)

'I think we're all familiar with the fun of finding a bargain and feeling we've saved money. This is probably the main reason. To be frank, I think another reason is the feeling of following the crowd. I mean, if we see thousands of other people heading to the shops, we have an urge to do the same thing even if we don't really need to buy a product. Yes, I think those are the two major reasons.'

What are the advantages of Internet shopping over shopping in stores? (Ideas question)

'I can think of 3 big advantages of shopping by Internet. For one thing, it tends to be cheaper than in-store, and that's a huge attraction. Besides that, using the Internet is much quicker and more convenient, because we don't have to travel or spend time in town centres; so it's better for the environment too in some respects. The third advantage is the ability to compare products very quickly for quality and price, and so make the best choice possible.'

Are there any possible disadvantages or risks? (Ideas question)

'Well, the biggest danger is the risk of fraud because criminals access your payment details or other personal data when you buy online. The other problem is that you don't actually see the product until it's delivered, so you might find it's different from what you expect in terms of the colour, the texture and so on. That's quite a common problem, in fact, especially for clothing.'

Should all shops have facilities for disabled people? (Opinion question)

'There are two sides to this. I agree with people who say that disabled access should be available wherever possible, so that disabled people can go shopping just like everyone else. That's only fair, of course. But on the other hand, some shops are in locations where it would be impossible or incredibly expensive to install things like lifts and ramps, for example in historic buildings or in remote sites. I think we need to make an exception for places like that, but all other shops should certainly have these facilities.'

Concluding and reviewing the IELTS Speaking test

At the end of Part 3, the examiner will say *'Thank you for your answers. We have now reached the end of the speaking test'* or something similar, and then show you to the exit door. You should smile, say *'Thank you for your time'* and offer to shake the examiner's hand.

After you leave the exam room, it is a good idea to relax and spend some time thinking about your performance in the test. This is because the techniques you use in the speaking test are similar to techniques you should use in real-life situations such as seminars, professional discussions and meetings in English-speaking countries.

Ask yourself:

Did I engage with the examiner and build a rapport as soon as we met?

Did I present myself in a calm, professional way? Did I speak calmly and maintain eye contact?

Did I listen carefully to questions and identify the main points?

Did I answer all parts of the questions?

In Part 1, did I show that I understand the situations I described, using the 2 step process?

In Part 2, did I show that I can organise my description using notes? Did I use the notes to help my description? Was my description structured and interesting?

In Part 3, did I show that I understand the difference between 'opinion' questions and 'ideas' questions? Did I consider the different aspects of 'ideas' topics, and did I give 2 or 3 logical ideas for 'ideas' topics?

Did I use the most advanced English possible for me? Did I ask for clarification in an appropriate way?

Did I learn any new vocabulary, or did I notice that I need some vocabulary on a certain topic?

Of course, it is possible that you might need to take the IELTS test again until you achieve the band that you need. Reviewing the test like this will also help you improve your performance next time.

Summary of the strategies

Try to build and maintain a friendly relationship with the examiner with your handshake, greeting and eye contact. Sit in an alert, professional way in the chair.

In Parts 1 and 3, when the examiner asks a question, identify in your mind the general topic being asked (Think: *'Ok, she's asking me about my country's food'* or *'That's an ideas question about transport problems'*) and then use the strategies we have described in this book. For each question, stay on the topic that the examiner asks about. For example, if the question is about sport, do not talk about music, even if you find this more interesting.

In Part 2, use the 1 minute preparation to make notes, and use the notes and your watch *occasionally* to guide your speaking.

Try to use advanced vocabulary if possible, but don't worry about speaking in a very formal way. Don't use slang or comic words (for example, don't say that your best friend is a *'geek'* or *'super cool.'*) The examiner may not understand or may not appreciate these words.

Don't make jokes or ask the examiner questions about his/her situation.

When you finish each answer, smile briefly at the examiner and wait for the next question.

If you think you have made a grammatical or pronunciation mistake, do not stop to worry about this. Just try not to repeat the mistake again in the test. Remember, there are many examples of candidates who make small grammar mistakes who still achieve Band 8 or 9.

If you don't understand a word or a question, say *'Sorry, what does X mean?'* or *'Sorry, could you repeat that question?'* This is not a problem if you do it just once or twice.

Remember, the examiner wants to give you the best possible score. He/she can only do this if you help by answering in the way described in this book.

Complete Speaking Tests for you to practise

Use these tests with a friend or another student of English. Your friend should read this book, and play the role of examiner, using these examiner's questions.

When you come to Part 2, your friend should show you the Part 2 task instructions on their device or printed on paper, and allow you to make notes for 1 minute before you speak for between 1 and 2 minutes.

After each test, your friend should give you feedback on your use of the strategies in this book. For example *'In Part 3, you gave me an opinion, but you didn't explain why you have this opinion, and you didn't consider any other aspects of the situation.'*

Practice Speaking Test 1

Part 1

Examiner's questions

Tell me about your spare time interests. What are your hobbies?
What sports do you enjoy watching?
Do you watch sports on TV or in person? Why?
Do you do any sports as well? Which ones?
What leisure activities are popular in your country?
What kind of food is popular in your country?
Is there a special national dish? Can you describe it?

What is the climate like in your home town?
What are the main businesses in your home town?
What amenities does your home town have for the public?

Part 2

Task card

Describe a long journey that you have made
Say when this was and where you went
How you travelled
What you did and saw on the journey
And say how you felt at the end of it

Prepare for 1 minute, then speak for between 1 and 2 minutes

Follow-up examiner's questions

Would you recommend this as a method of travelling? Why/ why not?
Do you think you will make that journey again in future? Why/ why not?

Part 3

How has international travel changed over recent years?
Is it better to have holidays in our home countries or to go abroad?
Do you think that tourism damages the environment?
Why do some people prefer to have holidays alone?
What skills and qualities would a good tour guide need?

Practice Speaking Test 2

Part 1

Examiner's questions

What were your favourite subjects at school? Why?
Do you plan to study more in future? What/ why?
How do you prepare for exams and tests?
What careers are popular in your home country? Why?
Do your friends work or study? What do they do?
How do you keep in touch with your friends and family?
Do you use the postal (mail) service much? What for?
What use do you make of social media?

Part 2

Task card

Describe something you bought which you were not happy with
Say what you bought and from where
Why you were not happy with it
What you did about this
And say what happened as a result

Prepare for 1 minute, then speak for between 1 and 2 minutes

Follow-up examiner's questions

Would you buy from the same place or source again?
Have you bought similar products since then?

Part 3

How has the Internet changed the way people shop?
Do you think that online will replace real stores completely?
How can people protect themselves when shopping online?
Do supermarkets have too much power these days?
What skills would a person need to run a very large, busy store?

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