



IELTS Masterclass Pack: Speaking

Produced by IDP IELTS Europe

Speaking Part 1

Speaking Part 1: Sample questions

Study

- What do you study?
- Where do you study that?
- Why did you choose that subject?
- Is it a popular subject in your country?
- Do you plan to get a job in the same field as your subject?

Your family and friends

- Who is your oldest friend?
- Would you say you have a lot of friends?
- What do you tend to do with your friends?
- Who are you closest to in your family?
- Is family important in your country?

Your hometown

- Tell me a little bit about your hometown.
- Is it a good place to live?
- How often do you go back there?
- What can visitors to your hometown see?
- How could your hometown be improved?

Free time activities and going out

- How do you spend your free time?
- Do you prefer to spend time with others or alone?
- What is a common leisure activity in your country?
- Do you think leisure time is important?
- What did you enjoy doing in your free time as a child?

Speaking Part 1: Useful language

During the Masterclass, we presented the following useful phrases to help you expand your answer and speaking more fluently in the first part of the speaking test:

Stalling for time	Saying 'yes' in a different way
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Well, let me see...• In my case....• Hmm, I'd have to say....	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes, for sure...• Exactly• That's definitely the case
Saying something negative	Saying you like something
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm sorry but ...• I'm afraid (to say that) ...• To be (perfectly) honest, ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm pretty fond of...• I'm really keen on...• I'm a big fan of...
Saying you don't like something	Describing frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm not really fond of...• I really can't stand...• ... gets on my nerves	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Every other day, (= Frequently)• Once in a while, (= Occasionally)• Once in a blue moon, (= Rarely)
Adding more	Comparing with the past
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Also, ...• Another thing (as well) is ...• What else? Oh, I ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• But when I was (a bit) younger I used to ...• But in my school days I used to ...• But back in the day I used to ... (= In the distant past)

Speaking Part 2

Examiner's feedback

Michał from Poland scored a Band 6.5 in Part 2 of his Speaking test.

This is the question he answered:

Describe a well-known person you like or admire.

You should say:

- who this person is
- what this person has done
- why this person is well-known

and explain why you like or admire this person.



Band 6.5

Michał, Poland

Part 2: A well-known person

This test taker is able to speak at length without loss of coherence. Although some hesitations and reformulations occur, there is not much repetition across his long turn. He sequences the information appropriately and links ideas using a range of discourse markers.

He also uses a range of vocabulary, including less common items (*legend; background; inspired; creativity; style*), with

some flexibility and awareness of collocation (*a pop icon; fight for their rights*). Although there are inappropriate word choices, these do not impede comprehension and the range lifts the rating to a higher band.

He also uses a range of complex structures and embedded clauses, with some flexibility. Although his tenses are not always accurate in this part, error-free structures are still frequent.

He has a strong accent and regularly produces 'f' for 'th'. In this part of the test, however, he only mispronounces individual words (*leegend; founds* for funds), and although his stress patterns are sometimes distorted by intrusive fillers (*ehm*), his speech is generally clear.

This is the feedback he received from the examiner:

Michal's answer:

I shall describe a well-known person I'd like to meet or admire. ..

This person ...is called Madonna by many people... actually, that is her name that was given by...in her birth.

I would like to meet her because I admire her because she is a the most popular singer....she is a legend and a pop icon in ..in the world. ..she's well-known pop-star ... and I admire her because of her background because of her ...because she sings very well, and she's got nice songs...

And she she inspires many people by her creativity and ... style, fashion style as well. I admire her as a normal person, as a mother of a son and daughter and what .. he's ..she's done in the past... she supported many organisations and funds many people.

Speaking Part 2: Sample topics

As you saw with Michal's answer in the video, each Part 2 question is similar in the way it's presented. You can see some examples of possible questions below:

Describe a museum

- Where is the museum?
- How often do you visit the museum?
- Which type of museum is popular in your country?
- Why do you want to visit the museum?

Describe your favourite photograph

- Where was the photo taken?
- Who took the photo?
- What can be seen from the photo?
- Explain why it is your favourite photograph.

Describe a special occasion in your life

- Where did it take place?
- When did it take place?
- Who was there?
- Explain your feelings on this occasion.

Describe your favourite movie

- What's the name of the film?
- What was it about?
- Who are the main characters in it?
- Why do you like it?

Describe a newspaper or magazine you enjoy reading

- What is it called?
- Which parts of it do you like?
- When and where do you read it?
- Explain why you enjoy reading it.

Describe an area of your country you know and like

- Where is it?
- What are its special features?
- What do you and other people do in this area?
- Explain why you like it.

Describe a party

- What was the party?
- Why was the party held?
- Who attended the party?
- What did you do for that party?

Talk about a subject you are studying

- What subject are you studying?
- What is the subject about?
- How do you feel about it?
- Explain why you are interested in it

Where is it?

- What are its special features?
- What do you and other people do in this area?
- Explain why you like it.

Speaking Part 2: Descriptive vocabulary

To improve your vocabulary for Speaking Part 2, learning some descriptive language will help. The collocations below were presented during the Masterclass:

To describe places

- impressive architecture
- a tranquil environment
- stunning scenery
- trendy bars and cafes
- an historic centre
- a vibrant shopping district

To describe people

- is in his twenties/fifties/sixties
- has shoulder-length / cropped / long hair
- bears a striking resemblance to...
- is laid-back and fun-loving
- is painfully shy
- is the life and soul of the party

To describe books and films

- to be engrossed in
- a big reader
- a real page turner
- the central character
- stunning special effects
- box office hits

To describe objects

- the latest model
- by a well-known company
- top quality
- unusual because
- couldn't live without it
- brings back memories of...

Speaking Part 2: Useful language

We recommend learning some general Speaking Part 2 phrases before test day. Here are some examples:

Asking about what a word on the cue card means:

- Do you mind my asking what XX means, please?
- Sorry. Could you explain this word here?

Asking if you can talk about a slightly different topic:

- I'm not sure about that so can I talk about (something similar)? Is that okay?
- Is it ok to speak about XX (something similar)?
- Am I able to talk about XX instead?

Before you start your presentation:

- Can I start?
- I think I'm ready.

Starting your presentation:

- I'm really glad I got this topic because....
- There were many things I could have spoken about today, but I've decided on...
- The only thing I could think of to speak about was....

Giving yourself time to think:

- So, I think it was....
- I can't remember the word in English exactly but....
- Have I covered everything? Oh no....
- What else can I say? Well, I suppose....

Getting back on topic:

- Where was I? Oh....yes.....
- Anyway,
- Sorry, I think I'm going off-topic.....

Thinking about things you can't remember:

- I can't remember exactly, but...
- I've forgotten, but....

Speaking Part 3

Speaking Part 3: Sample questions

The possible topics and questions that might come up in Speaking Part 3 vary considerably. Here are some examples:

Eating habits

- Tell me about the types of food that people eat in your country.
- How are the eating habits now in your country different from eating habits in the past?
- How healthy is your country's food?
- Why do you think different cultures have different table manners?

Education

- How are education priorities today different from those in the past?
- What is your opinion on the way languages are taught in schools?
- How can the type of school you go to affect career success?
- What changes do you think will happen in the classroom in the near future?

Environment

- Are there any environmental problems in your country?
- Do you think people are concerned enough about the environment?
- Do you think older people have as much awareness about environmental problems than the younger generation?
- Do you think recycling is important?

Leisure activities

- What types of leisure activities are popular in your country?
- Why it is important for people to have time for leisure activities?
- Are the types of leisure activities that are popular today the same as those that were popular when your parents were young?
- What types of leisure activities may become more popular in the future?

Family

- Is family important in your country?
- How do you think family will change in the future?
- Who do you think should be responsible for the care of the elderly; the family or government?
- Why do you think some people choose not to have children these days?

Speaking Part 3: Useful language

We would recommend before test day, to practise using some of these useful phrases:

Asking for clarification

- Could you explain what you mean by..?
- Could you rephrase the question?
- Could you say that again?

Stalling for time

- That's a(n) interesting/tough/difficult question.
- I don't know much about this issue but ...
- I've never really thought about it before but ...

Self-correcting

- Or rather ...
- I mean ...
- Or, should I say ...

Expressing your opinion

- In my view...
- As I see it...
- As far as I'm concerned...

Giving an example

- Take (), for example.
- Look at (), for instance.
- A good example of this is ().

Speculating and expressing possibility

- I would imagine that...
- I think it's likely/unlikely
- I'd say...

Introducing other ideas

- On the other hand, ...
- Or, to look at it another way, ...
- Then again, ...

Commenting on your own ideas

- I know this may sound obvious but ...
- This may sound strange but ...
- I'm sorry to have to say this but ...

Concluding

- So, that's why I think ...
- Anyway, that's why...
- So, to return to my original point, ...

Fulfilling the marking criteria

What is the marking criteria?

Over the page, you will find the speaking assessment criteria for this part of the test. You should familiarise yourself with the requirements for the band score you need before test day.

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features develops topics fully and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety sustains flexible use of features throughout is effortless to understand
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language develops topics coherently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully, with occasional inaccuracies uses paraphrase effectively as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures flexibly produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of pronunciation features sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices uses paraphrase effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies generally paraphrases successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice rarely attempts paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a limited range of pronunciation features attempts to control features but lapses are frequent mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks with long pauses has limited ability to link simple sentences gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pauses lengthily before most words little communication possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only produces isolated word or memorised utterances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot produce basic sentence forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speech is often unintelligible
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no communication possible no rateable language 			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend 			

Fluency and coherence: Inserting natural pauses

Part of speaking fluently, means that you pause briefly at appropriate times to take a breath. Have a look at this Speaking Part 2 answer shown on the Masterclass video and, within the text, highlight where you would insert a very short pause. Then compare your answer with the one shown on the video.

Describe a wedding you've been to or heard about.

My sister's wedding has to be the one I'd like to talk about today. It happened quite some time ago now because I haven't actually been to that many weddings.

The first thing I'm going to talk about is who got married. It was my sister's wedding and she was getting married to my brother in law, Paul. They had been going out for quite some time; about two or three years before their big day I think, or maybe more.

Examiner's comments: A Band 5 candidate

Katsuhara from Japan received the following feedback on his Speaking Part 3 performance:



Band 5

Katsuharu, Japan

Part 3: Hobbies

In spite of some hesitation, the test taker can generally maintain the flow of speech, but he does not offer sufficient extension to give long responses. He uses a range of connectives and markers, although these tend to be rather mechanical and are almost always at the beginning of his sentences. There is some hesitation, reformulation and occasional loss of coherence, but generally simple speech is produced with some fluency.

He tends to personalise responses and also uses vocabulary repetitively, which indicates a lack of confidence in his resource. Nevertheless, he demonstrates sufficient language to talk about more general trends.

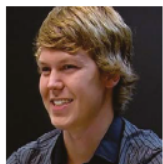
He tends to use a limited range of structures repetitively, including 'if' clauses, but with little complexity beyond these. He is able to demonstrate control of basic structures, but errors occur repeatedly.

His speech is generally clear, although there is some mispronunciation of sounds and words; rhythm is frequently interrupted and stress and intonation patterns are not always appropriate.

This is a good example of a Band 5 performance.

Examiner's comments: A Band 7 answer

Hendrik from Germany received the following examiner's report for his Speaking Part 3:



Band 7

Hendrik, Germany

Part 3: Famous people

This test taker can maintain the flow of speech without noticeable effort and there is no loss of coherence. He uses a variety of linking words and markers (*I would say; that's a good question; as I said; as long as*), but he overuses the filler (*yeah*) and sometimes referencing is inaccurate (*for the one or the other reasons*).

He uses a wide range of vocabulary, including some less common and idiomatic items and effective collocation (*easy to blame; global warming; financial crisis; he stands for something; can't stand the pressure*). However, sometimes

he lacks precision in his choice of words and expressions (*Greek* instead of 'Greece'; *on the other side of the lake; environmentally people/things; a big branch*).

His grammar displays a good range of both simple and complex structures. Many of his sentences are error-free but he makes some mistakes in subject/verb agreement (*people who wants; the people who admires him*), articles (*the normal person*) and relative pronouns (*everything what happens*).

His pronunciation is clear and easy to follow. He uses both sentence stress and intonation effectively to convey meaning (*you can't blame a **soccer** player but it's **easy** to blame the **politicians***). He does have a noticeable accent, however, and his mispronunciation of a few words results in occasional loss of clarity (*wole model* for 'role model'; *wong* for 'wrong'; *serf the planet* for 'serve the planet').

This test taker is a clear example of a Band 7.

Improving your score

IELTS Speaking self-assessment checklist

When you're practicing for the speaking test at home, we recommend you use the following checklist to assess your performance:

FLUENCY	Yes	No	Comments
Did you hesitate or pause too much?			
Did you speak too quickly or too slowly?			
Did you use 'fillers' when you couldn't think of the right word[s]?			
Did you use synonyms, to express the same or similar meaning when you had forgotten a word?			
COHERENCE			
Was your answer organised and easy to follow?			
Did you use words to connect your ideas?			
Did you refer to the question at the beginning of your answer?			
Did you develop your answer giving reasons & examples?			
Did you continue to refer back to the main idea of the question using referencing words?			
LEXICAL RESOURCE	Yes	No	Comments
Did you paraphrase the question?			
Did you use a wide range of vocabulary?			
Did you avoid repetition?			
Did you use idioms or collocations?			
For part 3 – was your answer abstract (as required) or too personal?			
GRAMMATICAL RANGE	Yes	No	Comments
Did you use a variety of grammatical forms?			
Did you use some complex sentences?			

GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY			
Did you use the correct verb tense?			
Did you use modal verbs accurately?			
Did you use articles correctly?			
Did you use conditionals correctly?			
Did you use comparative/superlatives properly?			
Did you make errors with subject + verb agreement?			
Did you make frequent grammatical mistakes?			
PRONUNCIATION	Yes	No	Comments
Did you speak using the correct rhythm or sentence stress?			
Did you pronounce words accurately?			
Did you vary your intonation?			
Were you clear and easy to understand throughout?			
Did you use the correct word stress?			

Pronunciation

The phonemic chart

We mentioned the phonemic chart in the Masterclass. We recommend that you become familiar with it and recognise which sounds you have difficulty saying. Then download a pronunciation app to practise individual sounds. We like this app which is free:

<http://www.macmillaneducationapps.com/soundspron/>

1 i bean many	8 u moon you	12 Iə dear	17 ʊə curious	<h1>English Sound Chart</h1> <div>▽ △ ▶ ▶</div> <div>Voiceless Sound</div> <div>Voiced Sound</div> <div>Sound Variation</div>					
2 ɪ tip	5 ə sir the	9 ʊ shook	13 eɪ same		15 əʊ go	18 ɔɪ choice			
3 ɛ hair met	6 ʌ fun	10 ɔ shore	14 aʊ loud		16 ʌɪ hide				
4 a pan	7 ɑ card	11 ɒ lock							
19 f first	21 θ thick	23 s saw	25 ʃ she	27 h hard	28 p pick	30 t team	32 k code	34 ? witness	35 tʃ choose
20 v van	22 ð these	24 z zen	26 ʒ casual		29 b bed	31 d dine	33 g get		36 dʒ jet
37 w watch	38 r rug	39 j yet	40 l look	41 ɫ tall	42 m mode	43 n neck	44 ŋ song		

From: <https://pronunciationstudio.com/english-ipa-chart/>.

Other useful pronunciation websites and tools

- Wikipedia is a useful source to research the typical pronunciation problems speakers of your first language might have in English https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-native_pronunciations_of_English
- If there are any words you know you have problems pronouncing or are unsure of – look them up in a Learner's dictionary. We like <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/> and <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
- Checkout the pronunciation site on BBC 6 minute English <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/pronunciation>
- A fun way to practise connected speech is by singing along to pop songs – download the song lyrics, sing along and notice how the words and sounds are linked. Try www.lyricstraining.com
- Use the Google Assistant tool on your phone or device (very similar to those you might find on your Smart Speaker or mobile phone such as Alexa or Siri) to check how clear your pronunciation is. Find out more about it here: <https://assistant.google.com/>.

Improve your English at home

Use one of the websites below to find an IELTS speaking partner to practice for the test with:

- [IELTS Buddy speaking request board](#) –The IELTS Buddy forum allows you to connect with other people preparing for the test across the world.
- <http://www.speaking24.com/> - This is a fabulous resource to connect you with potential speaking partners. All you need is a Skype ID and you could be chatting in English to people across the world within minutes.
- <https://ielts-speakingpartner.com> – This group has almost 30,000 members. You can join via their website or their Facebook page

Other sites will be available via social media or What's App.