

Guide to the IELTS General Training test

Your short guide to achieving your target score with the IELTS General Training test

Do you want to work and live in an English-speaking country? What about securing a promotion or landing a job at a multinational company? To realise these opportunities, you'll need to prove to visa authorities and employers that you can speak English with clarity and confidence. The IELTS General Training test can help you do just that.

What is the IELTS General Training test?

The IELTS General Training test is an examination that serves as an international benchmark for measuring English language ability in social and professional contexts.

What is the purpose of the IELTS General Training test?

People seeking to secure employment at a large corporation or a visa for an English-speaking country need to first succeed on a recognised English proficiency test. The IELTS General Training test is one such test.

Who needs the IELTS General Training test?

The IELTS General Training test is for anyone looking to prove their English language ability in a social or professional context. As such, most applicants are looking to work in, or emigrate to, an English-speaking country. Some jobs in your own country may require that candidates have accredited English proficiency — the IELTS General Training test provides this accreditation.



Why choose IELTS over the alternatives?

When it comes to English proficiency tests, IELTS is the gold standard for those looking to prove their English ability. With over 3.5 million test takers annually, IELTS is the most popular English language assessment globally. Here's why millions prefer the IELTS General Training test each year:

Fair and holistic language testing

IELTS offers a well-rounded examination, ensuring a fair and accurate evaluation of your language proficiency across various dimensions.

Focus on all key skills

Beyond just an evaluation, the IELTS General Training test prepares you for professional life by honing all crucial language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Universal applicability

IELTS is relevant everywhere English is spoken, as it accepts both UK and US English. This makes it easier for test takers to use the English they know, preparing them for global conversations.

Flexibility and choice

Depending on your location, you can choose between IELTS on paper or IELTS on computer, both of which take place in a test centre.

One Skill Retake

When you take IELTS on computer with the British Council you also have access to One Skill Retake. This means you can retake a specific section of the test, rather than the entire test, saving time and money if you only want to improve your score in a single section. Check [here](#) to see if One Skill Retake is available in your country.



What's in the IELTS General Training test?

The IELTS General Training test is 2 hours and 45 minutes long and consists of four sections: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. Here's a concise breakdown of what's in each section:

Listening section

- **Duration:** 30 minutes + 10 minutes for transferring answers (this additional time isn't required for the computer-based test)
- **Format:** Four audio recordings of people speaking with a diverse range of accents
- **Types of questions:** Multiple choice, matching, diagram labelling, sentence completion
- **What you might hear:** Everyday conversations, monologues, educational discussions

Reading section

- **Duration:** 60 minutes
- **Format:** Three passages ranging from factual information to discussion pieces and analysis
- **Types of questions:** 40 questions
- **What you might read:** Texts are from sources like books, journals, magazines, and newspapers

Writing section

- **Duration:** 60 minutes
- **Format:** Two tasks
- **Task specifics:**
 - **Task 1:** Write a letter requesting information or explaining a situation (150-word minimum)
 - **Task 2:** Write an essay in response to a point of view, argument, or problem (250-word minimum)

Speaking section

- **Duration:** 10–14 minutes
- **Format:** Face-to-face interview
- **Sections:**
 - **Part 1:** General questions about familiar topics (4–5 mins)
 - **Part 2:** Speak about a specific topic on a card (up to 2 mins)
 - **Part 3:** Discuss abstract ideas related to the Part 2 topic (4–5 mins)
 - The Speaking assessment is recorded and, in some locations, may be scheduled on a different day

What do the IELTS scores mean?

Band score	Skill level	Description
Band 9	Expert user	You have a full operational command of the language. Your use of English is appropriate, accurate, and fluent. You show complete understanding.
Band 8	Very good user	You have a fully operational command of the language with only occasional inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. You may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. You handle complex detailed argumentation well.
Band 7	Good user	You have an operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage, and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally, you handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.
Band 6	Competent user	Generally, you have an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage, and misunderstandings. You can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
Band 5	Modest user	You have a partial command of the language and cope with overall meaning in most situations, although you are likely to make many mistakes. You can handle basic communication in your own field.
Band 4	Limited user	Your basic competence is limited to familiar situations. You frequently show problems in understanding and expression. You are unable to use complex language.
Band 3	Extremely limited user	You convey and understand only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.
Band 2	Intermittent user	You have great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
Band 1	Non-user	You cannot use the language except for a few isolated words.
Band 0	Did not attempt the test	You did not answer the questions.

Don't believe these IELTS myths

There are many misconceptions about the IELTS that can impact how you prepare for the test. Here's the truth on the most common IELTS myths.

1. IELTS is more difficult than other tests

Neither IELTS or TOEFL is objectively harder than the other, but IELTS has helped millions of people achieve their dreams of studying and working abroad, showing its practical approach and achievable standards.

2. Your accent will affect your score

This is not true. IELTS is an unbiased language proficiency test, and examiners don't favour any accent. What truly matters is that you communicate clearly and use precise vocabulary.

3. There are different IELTS tests for different countries

There's only one IELTS General Training test, and it's standardised globally. Regardless of where you take it, the test is the same, so there's no advantage or disadvantage based on your location.

4. Complex sentences guarantee better scores

Complexity isn't the key to IELTS success. Using complex words is acceptable, but make sure your sentences are clear and comprehensible. Simplicity often yields higher scores.

5. More writing equals higher scores

In IELTS Writing, quality is better than quantity. Lengthy essays won't necessarily boost your score but may introduce more errors. To excel, stick to the word limit and focus on clarity and coherence.

6. There's a single 'passing' score

Your target IELTS General Training score will vary depending on your goals or the job you're applying to. Each employer sets their own score requirements according to the role, so there's no one-size-fits-all passing score.

7. IELTS is impossible to prepare for

Preparation is key to success. The British Council offers a wealth of resources, including practice tests, study materials, and courses to help you prepare effectively and succeed on the test.

8. You can't retake IELTS

You can retake IELTS as many times as you wish. However, you should use your previous test results as a learning tool to improve your performance.

Preparing for the IELTS General Training test

At the British Council, we offer a variety of resources to help you understand the test format, improve your English skills, and build your confidence.

IELTS Ready

Our comprehensive IELTS test preparation offering, which includes study resources, practice tests, and masterclasses. *IELTS Ready* comprises two options: *IELTS Ready Member*, with study resources and practice tools free of charge, when you subscribe, and *IELTS Ready Member*, which provides a personalised study plan and 40+ practice tests, complimentary upon booking your test with the British Council. Book early to make the most of these resources.

Practice tests

These practice tests will introduce you to the IELTS test format, and help you become familiar with the types of tasks you will be asked to undertake on test day.

IELTS tips & videos

Tips from past test takers aimed at improving your performance. Practice materials can be found in each section.

IELTS Coach

Group classes and one-to-one sessions with an expert English language teacher. Coaching is available 24/7 and can focus on improving specific problem areas.

EnglishScore tutors

Personalised online tutoring from certified teachers. These one-on-one classes will help you prepare for your test whether it's a week, or a few months away.

IELTS face-to-face courses

Courses designed to help prepare you for your IELTS test, covering all four skills: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. Check your local British Council website to see if these courses are available in your country.



Why you should choose the British Council for your IELTS General Training test

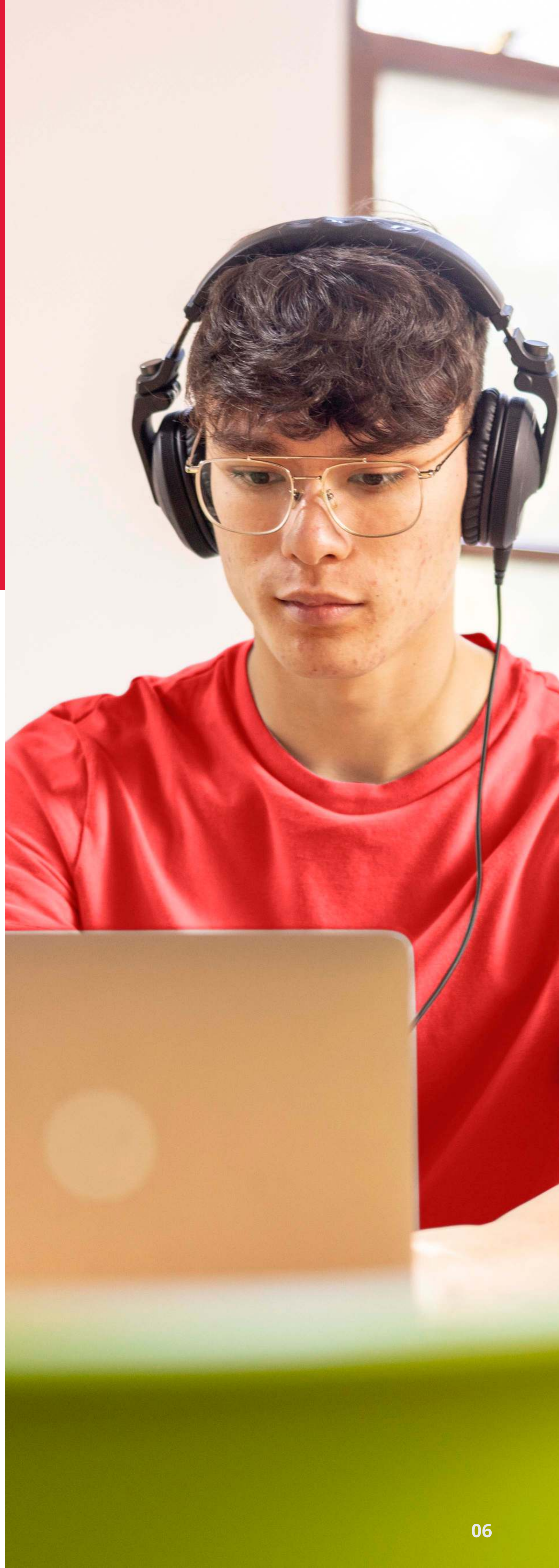
With decades of experience and a global reputation for quality, the British Council is the preferred choice for millions of IELTS test-takers. Here's why you should choose the British Council for your IELTS General Training test:

Global recognition

With 90 years of experience in English education and a presence in 100+ countries, the British Council is a globally recognised authority in English language teaching and assessment. Our expertise ensures you're in safe hands.

Unmatched preparation support

We provide more free preparation than any other test provider through our *IELTS Ready Premium* offering, which includes interactive activities, expert masterclasses, and over 40 practice tests. Make sure you book early to make the most of these resources.



Trusted and transparent

IELTS is jointly run by the British Council and our services are trusted by over 12,000 organisations worldwide.

Flexibility and choice

Depending on your location, you can choose between IELTS on paper or IELTS on computer.

Simple booking and testing

From booking your test to receiving your results, we have systems in place to guide you every step of the way.

Convenient dates and locations

All official British Council IELTS test centres are modern, comfortable, and conveniently located. Test dates are scheduled throughout the year, letting you pick the date that best suits your calendar.

Stress-free experience

From the moment you book your test to the day you get your results, we ensure a seamless, supportive, and transparent experience.

Professional and friendly staff

Our classes are led by highly trained educational specialists. IELTS tests are run by experienced staff who ensure your test day runs smoothly.



Steps for completing the IELTS General Training test

1

Book the test

Choose how to take your IELTS General Training test and [book online](#). Take your test at an official test centre.

2

Confirm test times

Receive a confirmation of booking detailing the test start time and venue address. Your Speaking test will be scheduled on the same day or within a 7-day window of your other test.



3

Prepare for the test

Study with *IELTS Ready*, IELTS Coach, and the many free resources we provide.



4

Take the test

Put your hard work to good use by taking the test. To prove your identity, don't forget to bring the same ID you used to register for the IELTS General Training test.

5

Get your results

Your results will be available 13 days after your IELTS on paper test or 3–5 days after your IELTS on computer test. You will receive an official Test Report Form (TRF).

6

Apply with your results

Use the TRF to apply to the higher education institute of your choice.





IELTS General Training success stories

Use the TRF to apply to the higher education institute of your choice.

Fathima, Sri Lanka

“ The British Council provides preparation materials, which is very useful if you're aiming for a high band score. Taking the mock tests was of great value because it gave me an idea of what to expect on test day.

Felipe, Philippines

“ I'm totally satisfied with my experience of taking IELTS with the British Council. The test was conducted in a convenient and professional manner. I'd definitely recommend it to those planning to relocate to an English-speaking country.

Chiranjivi, Nepal

“ I took IELTS on computer, which was a really awesome experience! In the Reading test, I felt really relaxed since I could view the passage and questions side by side. If you ask me, typing on the keyboard is much better, as you can delete text easily, making your written work look immaculate.

IELTS Frequently asked questions



Which IELTS test will I need to take to live and work in an English-speaking country?

Virtually all English-speaking countries accept the IELTS General Training test. However, countries may have specific requirements for taking the IELTS. Familiarise yourself with these requirements to ensure you're following the right steps.

What is a good IELTS General Training score?

Companies and visa authorities typically require scores ranging from 4.0 (limited user) to 7.0 (good user), though higher scores are often advantageous. Make sure to check the specific requirements of the country or job you're interested in.

How long is my IELTS score valid?

Your IELTS score is valid for two years from the date of the test.

When will I receive my IELTS test results?

Your results will be available 13 days after your IELTS on paper test or 3–5 days after your IELTS on computer test. You will receive an official Test Report Form (TRF). Some test centres also provide SMS alerts and an Online Results Service.

How do I send a copy of the Test Report Form to an immigration authority?

We can send up to five additional copies of your Test Report Form directly to institutions you are applying to. If you would like us to do this, please include the relevant addresses on the test taker portal within two years of taking the test.

Where can I find IELTS practice tests and other preparation material?

You can find [free practice tests and other preparation material](#) on our site.

Taking the next step

Don't put off your dreams any longer. Book your IELTS General Training test with the British Council now and take an important step toward a future filled with possibility.