



# IELTS Listening

## Test Preparation and Strategies

Preparing for any international English exam can be a stressful and time-consuming experience. But if you've gotten this far, congratulations! It takes a lot of hard work to arrive at this level. Now is when the real work begins. Taking an international exam requires discipline and not only a high level of English, but also a strong understanding of test taking strategies and a deep knowledge of the structure of the test. This document will address the structure of the listening section of the IELTS test and also some strategies to help you best tackle the exam.

### Overview

Sources:

<http://ieltsliz.com/ielts-listening-25-essential-top-tips/>

<http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/prepare-your-test/free-ielts-practice-tests/listening-practice-test-1>

<https://www.ieltsessentials.com/global/prepare/freepracticetests/listeningpracticetests>

<http://www.dcielts.com/ielts-listening/10-tips-for-listening/>



The International English Language Testing System (IELTS), like most international exams, follows a very strict pattern for each test. The listening section of this test is no different. Below you will find an overview of the structure of the listening section:

Part One	Part Two	Part Three	Part Four
Two people having a general conversation, often on the phone exchanging info.	A monologue about an everyday social context, often an announcement	Conversation of up to four people discussing an academic topic	Monologue in an academic context, often a university style lecture

The listening section of the test takes approximately 40 minutes with 40 questions and will require the test taker to first write their answers on an informal sheet and then transfer those answers to an official answer sheet. Remember that you will listen ONLY ONCE to the audio, and it will not be repeated under any circumstances, so preparation is paramount for success.

### Strategies

#### **1. Know the Question Types**

The IELTS exam offers a wide variety of question types, including fill-in-the-blank questions that could be in a form, summary or complete sentences; multiple choice; categorizing answers; diagram labeling; table completion; among others. It is very important that you have seen these question types before so that you know what to expect.

#### **2. Make Predictions**

The IELTS exam allows you to look at the questions before you listen. You will look at 5-8 questions at any one time, and the test gives you up to two minutes to study the questions before you hear the corresponding section of the listening. During this time you should be looking at the questions and making predictions about what type of answer you are listening for. If you know that you are listening for a number or name, you are more likely to catch it during the audio.

#### **3. Look at Two Questions at the Same Time**

Because you will be answering questions while you listen, it is essential that you maintain more than one in your mind at the same time. If you merely wait for one question and then it is answered and you are unaware, you will continue to wait for that question while many others pass. If you are looking at two questions at the same time, you will be more aware if you miss a question and can more easily catch up, not missing many, many more answers as you wait.

#### **4. Check Your Spelling**

The IELTS exam will invariably make you spell difficult names and transcribe numbers. Any incorrect spelling is considered wrong, and the numbers must be exact—you will not get half points for being *almost* correct. The IELTS also plays with language intricacies like letters that

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sound similar such as *B* and *V*, *T* and *D*, and *A*, *E*, and *I*. It will also mix numbers that sound similar like *13* and *30* in order to try to trick you. Being aware of these things is essential.

### **5. Don't Be Impatient**

Oftentimes, the IELTS exam will give an answer that you *think* is correct, then change the answer by way of the speaker correcting themselves, or giving slightly different or new information. It is essential to listen to the entirety of the answer before making a decision about what is correct, otherwise you will certainly lose points. *Be patient*, and if you listen well, you will catch these tricks and get the right answer!

### **6. Be Ready for Accents**

This exam is an international test and thus will present a wide variety of native English accents. Places from all over the English speaking world will be represented, and don't forget that English is an official language in India, South Africa and New Zealand where students often have more difficulty with the way that people speak. Finding resources to expose yourself to many accents is very important in your preparation for the exam. Also, be sure to look for unique phrasing or verbiage in a variety of dialects. If you know that you struggle with Irish accents, for instance, try to find a news program or podcast online that can expose you to more of the sound of that accent.

### **7. Concentrate and Don't Panic**

Listening for 30 minutes straight is a daunting task even for a native speaker, so you must learn to be able to concentrate for that duration of time. One effective form of practice is to find a 30-minute podcast and not simply listen passively, but take notes for the full 30 minutes. If you are able to do this, you know that you won't have a problem being engaged for an extended amount of time. Also be aware that panicking will not do you any favors. If you miss two or three questions consecutively and begin to panic, remember that you are missing more answers during your freak-out session. Keep calm and carry on as the British would say, episodes of panic rarely help.

### **8. Practice Makes Permanent**

The notion the "practice makes perfect" is a very flawed one. How you practice is how you will perform on the test. If you practice inconsistently and don't have a plan, this will reflect in your test score, but if you look at the details and practice your weaknesses, you will certainly be more successful. Coming up with a plan, taking a class and seeking out valuable resources will undoubtedly result in a more ideal score and hopefully save you some time and money in the long run. Tests are not cheap, so getting the most out of your investment is crucial.

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