

## Mastering IELTS Speaking Part 1: Tips and Sample Questions

The IELTS Speaking Test is designed to evaluate your **ability to communicate effectively** in English. It is divided into **three parts**, with Part 1 being the easiest and least stressful. In this section, the examiner will ask you **general questions** about **familiar topics** such as your home, family, work, studies, and **personal interests**.

While Part 1 seems simple, giving clear and engaging answers can boost your confidence and set a positive tone for the rest of the exam. Let's dive into how you can ace this section with tips and a selection of sample questions.

### UNDERSTANDING IELTS SPEAKING PART 1

Duration: 4-5 minutes

Number of Questions: Around 12

Types of Questions: **Simple, personal, and familiar topics**

Key Focus: Fluency, coherence, and pronunciation (the accuracy of your grammar and vocabulary matters, but your **fluency** is most important here)

### HOW TO PREPARE FOR IELTS SPEAKING PART 1

#### 1. Give Full Answers:

Don't just say "Yes" or "No" or give one-word responses. **Aim for 2-3 sentences** to develop your answers naturally. For instance, if asked "Do you like cooking?" don't just say "Yes." Add details, such as **what you like to cook or why you enjoy it**.

#### 2. Be Natural and Relaxed:

Part 1 is designed to put you at ease. Treat it like a conversation. Don't worry too much about perfect grammar—**fluency** and **clarity** are the focus here.

#### 3. Use a Range of Vocabulary:

Try to showcase different words instead of repeating the same vocabulary. For example, instead of saying "I like this," you could say "I enjoy this," "I'm fond of this," or "I'm passionate about this."

#### 4. Practice Pronunciation:

Pronunciation is key to being understood clearly. You don't need to have a British or American accent, but your speech should be clear. Practice speaking aloud to work on stress and intonation.

#### 5. Be Spontaneous, Not Rehearsed:

While preparation is essential, sounding robotic or overly rehearsed will hurt your score. The examiner wants to see natural responses. So even if you prepare, **don't memorize** your answers.

## SAMPLE IELTS PART 1 TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

To give you a better idea, here are some typical topics along with example questions and how you could answer them.

### Topic 1: Work or Studies

- Do you work or study?

"I'm currently a student. I'm studying economics at university, and I'm in my third year. It's a subject I find really interesting because it helps me understand how money, trade, and resources move around the world."

- What do you like about your job/studies?

"I enjoy learning about how businesses operate in a global environment. The discussions we have in class often make me think about how I can contribute to economic development in my country."

### Topic 2: Hobbies

- Do you have any hobbies?

"Yes, I love photography. I enjoy capturing landscapes and moments in nature. It helps me relax, and it's also a creative outlet where I can express how I see the world."

- How often do you engage in your hobby?

"I try to go out and take photos at least once a week. It depends on my schedule, but whenever I have free time, I grab my camera and explore new places."

### Topic 3: Your Home

- Do you live in a house or an apartment?

"I live in an apartment in the city center. It's a small but cozy space on the tenth floor, with a nice view of the park nearby."

- What do you like about your home?

"I love the convenience of being close to everything. There are plenty of shops, restaurants, and public transport options right at my doorstep, so it's very easy to get around."

### Topic 4: Food and Eating Habits

- What kind of food do you like?

"I'm a big fan of Italian cuisine. I love dishes like pasta and pizza because they're so flavorful and satisfying. I also enjoy experimenting with different sauces and toppings when I cook."

- Do you prefer eating at home or at a restaurant?

"I prefer eating at home because I can control the ingredients and try out new recipes. However, I also enjoy going out to restaurants when I want to try something new or when I'm with friends."

## Topic 5: Free Time

- What do you like to do in your free time?

"In my free time, I like to read novels and listen to music. Reading helps me unwind after a busy day, and music lifts my mood. I often read before bed and listen to music while commuting."

- Do you have a lot of free time?

"Not really. I'm quite busy with my studies, but I try to set aside at least an hour every day to relax. It's important for me to have a balance between work and relaxation."

### TOP TIPS FOR IELTS SPEAKING PART 1

- Speak clearly and confidently: Confidence can positively influence the impression you make on the examiner.
- Expand your answers: Don't be too brief—add a sentence or two explaining why or giving examples.
- Stay on topic: Answer the question directly. Avoid drifting off-topic or talking too much.
- Don't worry about mistakes: If you make a small mistake, correct yourself and move on. Don't panic—fluency is key.
- Practice daily: Practice answering questions with a friend, recording yourself, or taking part in mock exams to improve your fluency and reduce nervousness.

### CONCLUSION

IELTS Speaking Part 1 is an excellent opportunity to warm up and get comfortable with the examiner. The key is to be natural, expand on your answers, and showcase your ability to speak fluently. By practicing a wide range of topics and focusing on clear, coherent responses, you can approach this section with confidence and ease.

### IELTS Speaking: How to perform at your best in part 1

Learn how to start your Speaking test confidently and continue this confident performance for the whole test. Today, we will look at some tips to help you perform at your best in part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test.

We have created a series of three articles giving you tips and advice on how to perform at your best in all three parts of the speaking test; the part 1 introduction, the part 2 long turn and the part 3 discussion. Read on to see how to perform at your best in part 1 of the test.

Starting a test can be quite daunting for most test takers as you know you have to perform at your very best. We will go through some tips on how to successfully prepare for when you start your Speaking test and then to continue speaking in the same manner throughout the test.

Part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test is often referred to as the 'easiest' part. The reason for this, is the fact that the topics in part 1 are very familiar to you. You are asked questions about yourself, what you do and where you come from. You might also be asked questions about your family, your country, your personal experiences, and the activities you do. Talking about yourself should be easy as the vocabulary and topics are familiar to you.

Let's look at the structure of Part 1: Introduction

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The test begins with the examiner introducing himself or herself and checking the test taker's identification. It then continues as an interview.

If you are asked about where you live, you will be asked questions like this:

Let's talk about your home town or village.

- What kind of place is it?
- What's the most interesting part of your town/village?
- What kind of jobs do the people in your town/village do?
- Would you say it's a good place to live? (Why?)

Let's move on to talk about accommodation.

- Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in?
  - How long have you lived there?
  - What do you like about living there?
  - What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in?
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Before you read through the following notes, watch an example of part 1 of the IELTS test.

Part 1 - Introduction

The best way to start the test confidently, is to be confident!

Read through the following steps which tell you what happens at the beginning of your Speaking test and tips and advice on how to perform.

1. The examiner calls your name or candidate number.

Smile and respond with 'Yes, that's me', or a similar phrase, and walk confidently to meet them. You can then greet them with a simple 'Hello', or 'Hi, how are you?'.

2. Sit down at the test table.

Breathe in and get ready and remember to smile and appear at ease. The examiner will have started the recorder and will have their paperwork ready for the test. The examiner will ask you for your passport, so place it on the table in front of you.

3. The examiner will read out your details and will ask you some basic questions about who you are and where you are from.

Answer this briefly, for example, 'I come from China'. Do not produce a memorised response about the location of your city and why it is famous. You have not been asked for this information.

4. The examiner checks your ID.

Have your passport ready at the photo page, so it's easy for you to hand to the examiner. Say 'Yes, here you go', as you hand it to them.

5. The examiner asks you about what you do or where you live.

Be ready for these simple and familiar questions. If you work and study, choose one of these options and don't tell the examiner that you do both. The examiner will choose which questions they want to ask you based on your answer, so control the choice of topic by saying you either study - or - work. If you don't study or work, you could respond like this - 'Actually, I don't study or work, I'm a stay-at-home parent.'

6. Listen to the tense and make sure your answer matches the tense.

What do you study? - Present - I'm studying science at university.

What did you study? - Past - I studied science when I was at university.

What will you study? - Future - I'm planning to study science in the future.

7. Extend your responses to add some more information to your answer before the examiner asks 'why?'

What do you study? - Now - I'm studying science at university, because I have always wanted to be a scientist.

What did you study? - Past - I studied science when I was at university and now, I am preparing to do my doctorate.

What will you study? - Future - I'm planning to study science in the future, as I believe that scientists will help us deal with future environmental issues.

8. Prepare for these familiar questions.

Make sure you can talk about your work or study and what you have done and plan to do. Also make sure you can talk about where you live and your country. When you answer, use a range of cohesive devices and linking words/phrases.

9. Speak clearly at a good pace.

Make sure you open your mouth and clearly enunciate your words. Don't speak too quickly, or too slowly. If you smile occasionally as you speak, this action opens your mouth a bit wider and helps you to sound clearer. Also make sure to use intonation and rhythm. Stress important words, or words that show a contrast:

'Well, when I was younger I loved candies, but now that I'm older, I hate them!

10. If you don't understand the question, ask for clarification.

'Could you repeat that, please?'

'What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean?'

### Part 1 - Familiar topics

Once you have answered some questions about what you do or where you live, the examiner will ask you questions on common topics, like your interests and hobbies.

Listen to Aashish from Nepal. He received a band 7.5 for his overall performance in his Speaking test.

He was asked part 1 questions about two familiar topics: friends and food & cooking. Note how he extends his answers giving reasons for his opinion and ideas. If the answer is a bit shorter or the examiner wants to know more about what he said, he asks Aashish to extend with a 'Why?' or 'Why not?' question.

Practice answering the following questions on these topics:

Let's go on to talk about friends now:

- Are your friends mostly your age or different ages? (Why?)
- Do you usually see your friends during the week or at weekends?
- The last time you saw your friends, what did you do together?
- In what ways are your friends important to you?

I'd like to move on to talk about food and cooking now:

- What kind of food do you like to eat?
- What kind of new food would you like to try? (Why?)
- Do you like cooking? (Why not?)
- What was the last meal you cooked?

## Use functional language

Using functional language in part 1 will show that you are able to access the language and ideas needed to keep speaking.

Although you probably won't find part 1 questions difficult to answer, it is important that you vary your language when introducing personal experiences showing the examiner that you can extend your answers.

Here are some examples of phrases you can use:

- I once...
- I remember when...
- Back when I was...
- I don't remember exactly when, but...
- (Just) the other day...
- In my childhood...
- When I was very young...
- Not so long ago...
- Back in the day when I was a teenager...

Preparation is important and being ready to respond easily to familiar questions and familiar topics will mean that you are a more confident speaker.

## What happens in IELTS Speaking Part 1?

Many students struggle in IELTS Speaking Part 1 because they are not sure what to expect. The examiner may do or say things that can surprise the student and so make them more nervous than they already are. Let's make sure that doesn't happen to you.

Here is exactly what happens in Part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test;

- When you enter the speaking test room, the examiner greets you.
- The examiner will start to record the interview (audio)
- The examiner asks for your ID
- They (he or she) asks your full name
- They ask you two or three introduction or 'warm up' questions about either
- Your home
- Your hometown

- Your work
- Your study

Common 'warm up' questions

Part 1 of the test begins with some **'getting to know you'** questions.

The kind of questions you ask someone when you meet them **for the first time**.

So, you may get questions similar to these below. Note, these are not official IELTS Speaking Part 1 questions.

Hometown

- Do you like your hometown?
- What's a popular part of your hometown?
- Are there many shops in your hometown?

Home

Talking about your home

- Do you live in a house or a flat?
- What's your favorite room?
- Is there anything you want to change about your home?

Talking about your accommodation:

- Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in?
- How long have you lived there?
- What do you like about living there?

Work

- Do you work or are you a student?
- What do you do every day?
- Do you enjoy your job?

Student

- What do you study?
- What do you like most about your study?
- Why did you choose to study that?



## IELTS Speaking Part 1 questions

The 'warm up' is important, but the real evaluation begins after the warm up.

After the **warm questions above, you will get around 3 to 4 questions on 2 different topics.**

In Part 1 of the IELTS Speaking test, you will be asked a series of very similar questions, but on a wide range of different topics. The questions will be about you and your everyday life.

Types of Part 1 questions:

- Do you like \_\_\_\_\_? Why?
- Did you \_\_\_\_\_ as a child?
- What are your favorites \_\_\_\_\_?
- How often do you do \_\_\_\_\_
- Is this important to you?
- Is this common in your country?

Examples of IELTS Speaking Part 1 questions:

- Do you cook?
- Do you like cooking?
- Did you cook as a child?
- What is your favorite kind of food?
- How often do you cook?
- What is a popular dish in your country?

## IELTS Speaking Part 1 topics

The topics for IELTS Speaking change on a regular basis, but there are some common topics that come up, and within these topics there are plenty of **sub-topics** that might appear.

Below, you will see the kind of topics that are common in IELTS Speaking Part 1.

Study as many topics as you can so you can speak and use vocabulary flexibly "to discuss a variety of topics "(According to the official IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors)

For each topic below, you will see some sub-topics. The sub-topics are useful areas to study in order to broaden your vocabulary and flexibility to talk confidently on that topic. They are also useful to study because any of these sub-topics could also be a Part 1 topic.

- Animals

Keeping pets, wild animals, zoos

- Art

Visual and performing arts, types of paintings, art galleries and exhibitions, studying art at school, art in your home, digital art

- Books

Genres of books, digital and audio books, books you have read, books made into films

- Cities

Hometown, location, local industry, tourism, activities to do, likes and dislikes

- Clothes

Likes and dislikes, shopping for clothes, clothes at work / for leisure, clothes fashion, accessories (e.g. belts, hats, bags, jewelry, etc....)

- Computers

Different uses, learning how to use a computer, problems and challenges

- Countryside

Living in the countryside, comparisons to city life, challenges, possible work or jobs

- Family

Different members, their jobs, hobbies and personalities, your relationships, time you spend with family

- Food

Picnics, cooking, eating habits, healthy eating, favorite dishes, snacks, fast food

- Friends

Describing friends, relationships, kinds of friends, activities with friends

- Habits

Daily habits, good and bad habits, work routines, family habits, changing a habit

- Health

Staying healthy, keeping fit, sports, sport at school, public health and fitness facilities

- Home and accommodation

Descriptions, location, types, rooms, furniture

- Jobs

Activities, types, challenges, ideal job, changing job

- Mobile Phones

Uses of a mobile phone, apps, texting, social media

- Music

Likes, different kinds, how and where you listen, creating or playing music, musical instruments

- Photography

Taking photos, different kinds of photos, skill of taking photos, phones and cameras

- Sport

Different kinds, habits, doing sport, watching sport, being a fan

- Studying

Ability, techniques, school, teachers, concentrating, exams, places to study

- Transport

Means of transport, public and private transportation, sea, land and air transport

- Travel

Ways to travel, preferences, destinations, holidays

- Weather

Favorite weather, preferences (hot or cold), weather forecast, changes in weather and climate, weather and seasons

How to prepare for IELTS Speaking Part 1

Get familiar with the common Part 1 question types

- Discover the common Part 1 question types here

Don't prepare answers to all the IELTS questions you find on the Internet.

- Having prepared answers will make you sound unnatural
- You may get different questions; don't trust everything you read online!

- There are too many topics and questions to prepare.

Focus your preparation on learning how to speak on different topics, not how to answer lots of questions.

- Look at the bigger picture, your lifelong learning of English is more important than passing IELTS
- Learning the language, you need to talk on many topics will make you better prepared for IELTS
- Aim to talk flexibly about a range of sub-topics even within each topic.

Don't focus on technical vocabulary or dictionary definitions.

- You don't need to be an expert on topics like science, art, geography or history. It's more important to speak naturally.

#### Part 1 strategies

The most important thing to remember is Part 1 questions are about you and your life. They are specific, not abstract. Save the abstract and general ideas for Part 3.

- Focus on spoken English. If you think you sound like an expert or an academic, then stop – you are probably using inappropriate, written vocabulary.
- Get to the point – give simple direct answers.
- Keep talking – even if you have to make something up, it is better to say something, rather than keep quiet.
- Remember – you don't have to tell the truth! The examiner marks your English, not your ideas or content.
- You don't need to be an expert on topics like science, art, geography or history. It's more important to speak naturally.

#### Quick tips for Part 1

- Imagine the examiner is a new friend you have just met at a party
- Pause and think before answering
- Keep your answers short and simple
- Use collocations
- Use some adjectives to add color and interest

#### Useful phrases for Part 1 answers

One of the most common questions in IELTS Speaking Part 1 is about things you like, such as...

- Do you like music?
- Do you like coffee?
- Do you like social media?

You could answer with these phrases

Yes, I'm a big fan of music, in particular, Jazz music

For sure, I'm really fond of coffee

Yes, I can't get enough of it

Answering in the negative

No, I'm not really one for coffee

No, I'm not really into music

No way, I can't stand social media

Developing your answer

- Do you like science?

Yes, I do. What I like most about it is \_\_\_\_\_

Add an adjective clause

What I like most about it is it's so interesting

What I like most about it is it's so useful

Give an example

What I like most about it is it's so interesting, for example, last week I read an article about solar panels and how we can use them

Talking about animals in IELTS Speaking can be a challenge, not only for the vocabulary, but also knowing what to talk about.

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When talking about animals you like, the most common mistake is to use the singular, but if you are talking about this animal in general, you should use the plural.

- I like giraffe X
- I like giraffes / dogs / elephants 😊