

Twenty tips for IELTS success

- 1 In Listening, use the example at the beginning of the first section to familiarize yourself with the sound, the situation, and the speakers.
- 2 Keep listening until the recording stops, looking only at the questions that relate to the part being played.
- 3 There are often pauses in the recording between different sections. Use these to prepare for the next set of questions.
- 4 Answer Listening questions in the order they appear on the Question Paper. Remember that they normally follow the order of the information in the recording.
- 5 At the end of the recording you have some time to transfer your answers to the Answer Sheet. Check your grammar and spelling as you do so.
- 6 In Academic Reading, begin by going quickly through each passage to identify features such as the topic, the style, the likely source, the writer's purpose and the intended reader.
- 7 As you read, don't try to understand the precise meaning of every word or phrase. You don't have time, and those parts of the text might not be tested anyway.
- 8 Reading tasks sometimes have an example answer. If this is the case, study it and decide why it is correct.
- 9 Some tasks require you to use words from the text in the answer; in others you should use your own words. Check the instructions carefully.
- 10 The instructions may also include a word limit, e.g. Use no more than three words. Keep to this by avoiding unnecessary words in your answer.
- 11 In Academic Writing, you must always keep to the topic set. Never try to prepare sections of text before the exam.
- 12 Keep to the suggested timing: there are more marks possible for Task 2 than Task 1.
- 13 Organize and link your ideas and sentences appropriately, using a wide range of language and showing your ability (in Task 2) to discuss ideas and express opinions.
- 14 If you write less than 150 words in Task 1 or less than 250 in Task 2 you will lose marks, but there is no maximum number of words for either.
- 15 When you plan your essay, allow plenty of time at the end to check your work.
- 16 In Speaking, don't try to give a prepared speech, or talk about a different topic from the one you are asked to discuss.
- 17 Always speak directly to the Examiner, not to the recording equipment.
- 18 Whenever you reply 'Yes' or 'No' to the Examiner's questions, add more details to your answer. In each case, aim to explain at least one point.
- 19 Remember that you are not being tested on your general knowledge but on your ability to communicate effectively.
- 20 Organize and link your ideas and sentences appropriately, talking clearly at normal speed and using a wide range of structures and vocabulary.