

FREE IELTS BOOKS

IELTS Speaking: Parts 1, 2 and 3

What examiners really listen for, and what a stronger answer sounds like — ten everyday topics, band 6 next to band 7–8.

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IELTS Speaking: Parts 1, 2 and 3

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What this book is

This book is about the Speaking test — all three parts of it.

You already have the English. In the exam room, on a topic you did not choose, with someone listening and writing while you talk, it can disappear anyway. This book is not a vocabulary list and not a set of phrases to memorise. It shows you a weaker answer and a stronger answer to the same question, side by side, so you can hear exactly what moved.

Every cue card and every question in this book was written for it. None of them are real exam content — real cue cards are reused and circulated, which is exactly why memorising one is a bad plan. Learn the shape of a good answer instead, and it travels to whatever question you actually get.

The one thing this book cannot do

Pronunciation is one of the four things the examiner scores, and a book cannot hear you speak.

So this book teaches what to say and how to build it — not how to sound saying it. If your accent or your pronunciation is a real worry, the fix is not in these pages. It is to speak your answers out loud, to another person if you can find one, or recorded and played back if you cannot. Part 5 tells you exactly how to do that with what you learn here.

A book that pretended to teach pronunciation with no audio would be wasting your time to look complete. This one would rather tell you plainly what it does not do.

Parts 1, 2 and 3

They are one test, not three, but they ask for different things.

Part 1 is an interview. Four or five minutes of short questions about familiar things — where you live, your work or studies, your free time. Nobody expects a speech here. They expect natural, developed answers.

Part 2 is the long turn. You get a card with a topic and a few points to cover, one minute to make notes, and then you speak alone for one to two minutes.

Part 3 is a discussion. It grows out of your Part 2 topic into something more abstract — opinions, comparisons, how things have changed. This is usually the part people find hardest, and it rewards a considered answer more than an agreeable one.

How to use it

Read Part 0 once. It explains what is actually being scored, and everything after it refers back to that.

Then work through Parts 1, 2 and 3 one topic at a time. Read the question or the card, cover the answers, speak your own out loud for the time you would actually get, and only then read ours. Reading an answer without saying one first teaches you far less.

Part 4 is a list of the specific habits that hold people at band 6. Read it once you have practised a handful of topics, when you can hear yourself in it.

Part 5 has nine questions with no answers given. That is deliberate, and it tells you what to do with them.

One honest note

No book can promise you a score, and nobody who promises you one is telling you the truth.

What this book can do is show you what a stronger answer actually sounds like, in enough detail that you stop guessing. Saying it out loud is still yours to do.

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Part 0 — How Speaking is actually marked



0.1 The four things being counted

Like the writing test, your speaking is not given one score. It is given four, and they are averaged across the whole test — not once per part.

Fluency and Coherence — can you keep talking, and does it hang together?

Fluency is not speed. It is whether you can develop an answer without long pauses, restarts, or grinding to a stop because you ran out of things to say. Coherence is whether your ideas connect in an order a listener can follow — one thought leading to the next, not a list of unrelated facts about the topic.

Lexical Resource — do you have more than one way to say a common idea?

Not rare words. Range and naturalness. Can you paraphrase instead of repeating the same word four times, and do the words you choose fit the situation you are describing, rather than sounding recited from somewhere else.

Grammatical Range and Accuracy — the same trade-off as in writing, spoken.

Variety without breakage. Short correct sentences only will cap you; long ambitious ones that fall apart will cap you too. The middle path is the same one Book 1 describes for essays: a small number of structures you can use without thinking, mixed with plenty of simple, accurate ones.

Pronunciation — can you be followed comfortably, with natural stress and rhythm?

Named here because it is one of the four, and then set aside. This book cannot teach it — see "The one thing this book cannot do" in the front matter. What follows is entirely about the other three.

The part that changes how you should practise

All four scores are averaged across Parts 1, 2 and 3 together. A strong long turn does not rescue a weak interview, and a weak discussion does not erase a strong long turn. The examiner is building one impression of you across the whole conversation, not three separate ones.

This matters practically. Do not save your best English for Part 2 because it feels like the "real" test. Part 1's short questions are marked exactly as seriously.

0.2 What the three parts actually are

Part 1 (4–5 minutes). Short questions on familiar topics — home, work or study, daily life, things you like. It is an interview, not a test of ideas. The examiner wants to hear you speak naturally about things you already know, not to hear an opinion on something difficult.

Part 2 (1 minute to prepare, 1–2 minutes to speak). You are given a card with a topic and three or four points to cover. You get one minute and a pencil to make notes — not to write a script — and then you speak without interruption until the examiner stops you or your time runs out.

Part 3 (4–5 minutes). A discussion connected to your Part 2 topic, but pulled into more general, sometimes abstract territory. If Part 2 asked you to describe a person who taught you something, Part 3 might ask how people learn best, or whether older generations learned differently. This is deliberately the hardest part of the test, because it asks for reasoning, not description.

0.3 The one skill under everything: extending an answer

If this book taught only one habit, it would be this one.

The single thing that predicts a stronger score more than any other is answering a short question with more than a bare fact — without being asked to.

Claim. Reason. Example. Say what you think, say why, and make it concrete with something specific. Three short additions turn a one-line answer into a developed one, and you do not need advanced grammar or rare vocabulary to do it. You need the habit.

- *Claim*: "I don't really enjoy cooking."
- *Reason*: "I find it takes longer than I expect, and I lose patience halfway through."
- *Example*: "Last week I tried to make a simple soup and it took nearly two hours in the end."

That is four sentences instead of one, built from nothing more advanced than the first sentence already used. Every chapter after this one tests your answers against this habit, because almost every "what changed" note in this book comes back to it.

1.1 Where you live

The question

Can you tell me a little about the place where you live?

The trap: the memorised-sounding opener. Many candidates have practised an answer to this exact question so many times that it comes out flat and pre-loaded — *"I come from a small city in the north of my country"* — and answers a broader question than the one actually asked. Listen for the word "little": the examiner wants a specific, current detail, not a rehearsed geography summary.

Band 6

I live in a medium-sized city. It's quite crowded and there's a lot of traffic, but it's a convenient place because there are shops and things nearby. I've lived there for a few years now.

Band 7–8

I live in a mid-sized city about an hour from the coast, and what I'd actually mention is that my neighbourhood has changed a lot recently — there used to be mostly small family shops, and now there's a new shopping centre that opened last year, which locals still have mixed feelings about. Personally I like having more choice, but I do miss the smaller shops.

What actually changed

- **The band 6 answer describes a category; the band 7–8 answer describes a place.** "Medium-sized city" and "quite crowded" could be almost anywhere. "A new shopping centre that opened last year" could only be this answer.
- **It follows the claim-reason-example habit from 0.3 without being told to.** A specific recent change ("a new shopping centre"), a reaction to it ("locals still have mixed feelings"), and a personal position ("I do miss the smaller shops") — three additions built on one simple sentence.
- **"What I'd actually mention is" replaces silence while thinking.** It buys a beat of natural fluency without becoming a filler word, and it signals the answer is about to get specific.

1.2 Work or study

The question

Do you work or are you a student?

The trap: the one-line answer. "I'm a student" is a complete, correct sentence, and it is also the single most common way to lose Fluency and Coherence marks in Part 1. The question is an invitation to keep going, not a form to fill in.

Band 6

I'm a student. I study business at university. It's my second year. I chose it because I think it will help me get a good job in the future.

Band 7–8

I'm currently in my second year of a business degree, and if I'm honest, I chose it partly for practical reasons — it opens a lot of doors — but I've actually ended up enjoying the marketing side of it more than I expected. I didn't think I'd say that a year ago.

What actually changed

- **Four short sentences became two longer, connected ones.**

The band 6 answer is a list of correct, disconnected facts. The band 7–8 answer links them with reasoning: "partly for practical reasons..."

but I've actually ended up enjoying..." — one idea leading into the next, which is what Coherence is actually measuring.

- **A genuine reflection replaces a generic reason.** "It will help me get a good job" is the answer almost everyone gives. "I didn't think I'd say that a year ago" is a specific, personal detail that could only belong to this speaker.
- **"If I'm honest" is doing real work.** It signals a considered answer is coming, and it is a natural spoken hedge rather than a memorised opener — the difference 4.1 in Part 4 explains in more detail.

1.3 Free time and hobbies

The question

What do you like to do in your free time?

The trap: the list. "I like reading, swimming, and spending time with friends" answers the question honestly and scores worse than talking about one of those three for the same length of time. A list shows vocabulary for naming activities. It does not show Fluency and Coherence, because there is nothing for the ideas to connect to.

Band 6

I like reading books. I also enjoy swimming when I have time. And I like spending time with my friends on the weekend. These are my main hobbies.

Band 7–8

Reading is probably the one I'd pick if I had to choose — I try to read every night before bed, usually fiction, and it's become the way I switch off after a busy day. I used to think of it as a chore back when it was homework, but doing it by choice completely changed how I feel about it.

What actually changed

- **One activity, developed, beats three activities, named.** The band 7–8 answer picks a single hobby and stays with it long enough

to say something real about it, rather than moving on before any idea can develop.

- **A before-and-after contrast appears for free.** "I used to think of it as a chore... doing it by choice completely changed how I feel" is a small piece of reasoning about change — exactly the kind of thinking Part 3 will ask for directly, so practising it here is not wasted effort.
- **"If I had to choose" turns a list-shaped question into a single-answer question**, which is what gives the response room to develop instead of enumerate.

1.4 Daily routine and habits

The question

Can you describe a typical day for you?

The trap: present-tense monotony. "I wake up. I have breakfast. I go to work." Every sentence is correct and every sentence has the same shape, which caps Grammatical Range even though nothing in it is actually wrong — there is simply nothing to show variety with.

Band 6

I wake up at seven. I have breakfast and go to university. I have classes until the afternoon. Then I go home and do my homework. In the evening I watch TV or talk to my family.

Band 7–8

My mornings are pretty routine — up around seven, out the door by eight — but the rest of the day depends a lot on what classes I have. If it's a heavy day I'll usually grab something quick between lectures rather than a proper lunch, which probably isn't the healthiest habit, but by evening things slow down and that's when I actually get to relax, usually with my family or doing something for myself.

What actually changed

- **A single long, well-controlled sentence replaces a run of short identical ones.** "If it's a heavy day I'll usually grab something quick... which probably isn't the healthiest habit" uses a conditional and a relative-style aside without breaking — the kind of controlled complexity 3.5's three-structures rule in Book 1 describes, spoken instead of written.
- **A small honest aside ("which probably isn't the healthiest habit") adds personality without adding risk.** It is a short, safe piece of self-commentary, not a grammatically ambitious claim, and it is exactly the kind of low-risk addition that makes an answer sound like a person rather than a list.
- **The distinction between "pretty routine" and "depends a lot"** shows the speaker can talk about what varies, not only what stays the same — a small but genuine piece of range.

2.1 Describe a person

The card

Describe a person who taught you something valuable.

You should say:

- who this person is
- what they taught you
- how they taught you

and explain why what they taught you still matters to you.

The trap: describing the person and never reaching the lesson.

A minute of preparation and a familiar word — "describe" — pull many candidates straight into appearance and personality, and the card's actual point, what was taught and why it still matters, gets forty seconds at the end.

The one-minute plan

Who: an aunt, taught me to cook, not a chef, patient

What: not recipes - how to taste and adjust as you go

How: cooking together every visit, let me get it wrong first

Why still matters: I use it outside cooking too - trial before rules

Band 6

I want to talk about my aunt. She taught me how to cook when I was younger. She's a very kind and patient person. She taught me by letting me help her in the kitchen every time I visited. She showed me how to make different dishes. What she taught me still matters because I still cook the recipes she showed me, and I think about her when I make them.

(~115 words)

Band 7–8

I'll talk about my aunt, who's probably the person who taught me the most outside of school. She taught me to cook — but not recipes, really. What she actually taught me was how to taste something as you go and adjust it, rather than following instructions exactly. She did it by just letting me help in her kitchen every time I visited, and importantly, letting me get it wrong first rather than correcting me straight away. What still matters to me isn't really the cooking itself — it's that I picked up a way of learning things: try it, notice what's off, fix it. I catch myself using that approach in situations that have nothing to do with food.

(~135 words)

What actually changed

- **The band 6 answer covers all four bullet points thinly; the band 7–8 answer covers the last one properly and lets the others stay brief.** The card rewards depth on "why it still matters"

more than equal time on every bullet — 4.4 in Part 4 names this exact trade-off.

- **"Not recipes, really" and "not really the cooking itself" are precise negations**, not vague hedging. Saying what something is *not*, then correcting it, is a small, learnable device that makes an answer sound considered rather than rehearsed.
- **The final sentence generalises the lesson beyond the story.** "I catch myself using that approach in situations that have nothing to do with food" answers the card's actual instruction — why it still matters — instead of just restating that it does.

2.2 Describe an experience

The card

Describe a time you learned a new skill.

You should say:

- what the skill was
- how you learned it
- what was difficult about learning it

and explain how you felt once you could do it.

The trap: strict chronology with nothing to say once it's told.

"First I did this, then I did that, then I could do it" is a complete, honest account, and it runs out of material well before the minute or two is up, because a timeline has no natural place for reflection.

The one-minute plan

Skill: learning to drive, age 19, later than most friends

How: lessons + practice with my father, tense at first

Hard part: not the controls - staying calm with traffic around me

Felt: less about the licence, more that I'd stopped avoiding it

Band 6

I learned to drive when I was nineteen. I took lessons with an instructor and also practised with my father. At first I found it difficult because I was nervous. The traffic made me nervous too. After some months I passed my test. I felt very happy and proud when I passed.

(~110 words)

Band 7–8

I learned to drive at nineteen, which was later than most of my friends, and I think that's partly because I'd been putting it off — I was fairly certain I'd be a nervous driver, and I turned out to be right at first. The controls themselves weren't the hard part; it was staying calm with other traffic actually moving around me. What made the difference was practising with my father regularly rather than only in lessons, since he could talk me through it calmly when I got tense. Honestly, by the time I passed, the test itself felt almost secondary — what actually felt good was realising I'd stopped avoiding something I'd been putting off for years.

(~150 words)

What actually changed

- **The difficulty is named specifically rather than generically.** "I was nervous" appears in both answers, but only the stronger one says *what* was hard about it — not the mechanics, the traffic — which is the difference between a feeling reported and a feeling explained.
- **The ending answers the actual instruction instead of the obvious one.** The card asks how the speaker felt once they could do

it; "very happy and proud" answers that literally. "The test itself felt almost secondary" answers it more honestly and more specifically, and connects back to the opening detail about putting it off.

- **"Which was later than most of my friends" is an unprompted, self-aware detail.** Nothing in the card asked for a comparison to peers; adding one shows the speaker thinking about the story rather than reciting it.

2.3 Describe a possession or place

The card

Describe a place you enjoy spending time in.

You should say:

- where it is
- how often you go there
- what you do there

and explain why you enjoy spending time there.

The trap: generic praise standing in for a reason. "It's very nice, I like it a lot, it's very peaceful" answers the last bullet in words, without giving the examiner anything specific enough to picture. Generic praise is the possessions-and-places version of 3.6's "examples that are not examples" from Book 1.

The one-minute plan

Place: small park near my flat, ten min walk

How often: most weekends, sometimes after work

What I do: just sit, sometimes read, mostly nothing planned

Why: only place I don't feel like I should be doing something

Band 6

There is a small park near my flat that I like. It takes about ten minutes to walk there. I usually go on weekends. I sit on a bench and sometimes read a book. I enjoy spending time there because it is peaceful and green, and I can relax.

(~105 words)

Band 7–8

There's a small park about ten minutes' walk from my flat that I go to most weekends, and occasionally after work if I need to clear my head. I don't really go there to do anything specific — I'll bring a book sometimes, but mostly I just sit. What I actually enjoy about it is that it's possibly the only place in my week where I don't feel like I should be doing something more productive. Everywhere else, even at home, there's usually a reason I should be doing something else instead.

(~130 words)

What actually changed

- **"Peaceful and green" is replaced by a specific, personal reason.** Both are true descriptions, but only the second one could not have been written about a different park by a different person — it is about the speaker's relationship to productivity, not the park's appearance.
- **A small contrast does the explaining.** "Everywhere else... there's usually a reason I should be doing something else instead" defines the

park by what it is *not*, which is often a faster way to make a feeling concrete than describing what it is.

- **"Occasionally after work if I need to clear my head"** adds a **second, different context** beyond the first answer given in the plan, showing the place matters in more than one situation rather than only the routine one.

3.1 Learning and mentorship

Grows out of 2.1's cue card — a person who taught the speaker something.

The questions

Do you think people learn more from teachers or from their own experience?

Has the way people learn skills changed with the internet?

The trap: the flat opinion with no reasoning. "I think teachers are more important" is a complete answer to the first question and scores worse than a shorter answer that commits to a reason. Part 3 is discussion, not a vote.

Short answer

I think both are important, but probably experience teaches you more in the end.

Extended answer

I'd say it depends what you're learning. For something with real danger involved, like driving, I'd trust a teacher's guidance over trial and error every time. But for a lot of everyday skills, I think people only really learn once they've made a mistake themselves — a teacher can tell you something will go wrong, and it doesn't fully land until it actually does.

What actually changed

- **The short answer states a position without committing to a reason; the extended one narrows the claim before defending it.** "It depends what you're learning" is more defensible than a flat generalisation, and Part 3 rewards a position that has clearly been thought through over one that sounds confident but generic.
- **A concrete case (driving) grounds an abstract claim.** "Real danger involved" is not a rich vocabulary choice — it is a specific enough example that the listener can picture the claim being tested, the spoken equivalent of Book 1's rule that an example needs one specific thing in it.
- **The final clause extends the reasoning instead of just restating the claim.** "It doesn't fully land until it actually does" adds a *why*, which is what separates an opinion from an argument.

Has the way people learn skills changed with the internet?

Short answer

Yes, definitely. Now you can learn almost anything from videos online.

Extended answer

Definitely — and I think the biggest change isn't just the amount of information, it's that you can learn at your own pace and go back and rewatch something you didn't understand the first time, which you can't

really do with a teacher standing in front of a class. I do wonder, though, whether something gets lost without someone noticing when you're stuck and adjusting how they explain it.

What actually changed

- **The extended answer picks one specific mechanism of change** — pacing and rewatching — rather than the generic "you can learn almost anything," which could be said about any question on any topic.
- **A genuine counter-consideration appears at the end** ("I do wonder, though, whether something gets lost..."), which is exactly the acknowledge-the-other-side move 3.3 in the next chapter will name directly. It costs nothing in fluency and adds real depth.

3.2 Change and growth

Grows out of 2.2's cue card — a time the speaker learned a new skill.

The questions

How do people change as they get older?

Do you think it's important to keep learning new things throughout your life?

The trap: agreeing with the question's implied framing instead of forming an independent view. It is easy to hear "how do people change" and simply list changes without ever saying what the speaker actually thinks about them.

Short answer

People get more confident and more patient as they get older, I think.

Extended answer

I think people generally get more confident, though I'm not sure "patient" is always true — some people I know have actually got less patient as they've got older, because they feel like they have less time to waste. What I do think is fairly consistent is that people become more selective — more willing to say no to things that don't interest them, which younger people often feel they can't do.

What actually changed

- **The extended answer disagrees with part of its own first idea.** Correcting "patient" rather than listing three safe adjectives shows the speaker actually considering the claim instead of reaching for the first plausible word — a small but genuine piece of independent thinking.
 - **"Some people I know" grounds a general claim in something closer to real observation,** without needing an invented named story — a light touch of evidence is enough in a discussion answer.
 - **A single, specific claim ("more selective") replaces a vaguer, safer one.** It is more exact than "wiser" or "more mature," the kind of words that could describe almost any older person and therefore say almost nothing.
-

Do you think it's important to keep learning new things throughout your life?

Short answer

Yes, I think it's important, because the world keeps changing.

Extended answer

I do, though I'd say it matters less for the reason people usually give — keeping up with a changing world — and more because I've noticed that when I stop learning anything new, I actually feel less motivated

generally, even in areas of my life that have nothing to do with it. Learning something seems to keep a kind of momentum going.

What actually changed

- **The extended answer explicitly rejects the expected reason before giving its own.** "Less for the reason people usually give... and more because" is a structure that signals independent thought clearly, without needing sophisticated vocabulary to do it.
- **A personal, slightly unusual observation replaces the safe, expected claim.** "Keep a kind of momentum going" is a modest, plausible idea stated with appropriate hedging ("seems to"), which reads as considered rather than overreaching.

3.3 Possessions and value

Grows out of 2.3's cue card — a place the speaker enjoys spending time in.

The questions

Do you think people today value having personal space and quiet time more than in the past?

Is it becoming harder for people to switch off from work and daily pressures?

The trap: a one-sided answer to a question built to have two sides. Both questions above invite a comparison across time, and a confident answer with no acknowledgment of the other view usually sounds less convincing, not more, in Part 3.

Short answer

Yes, I think people value quiet time more now because life is busier than before.

Extended answer

I'd actually push back slightly on "more than in the past" — I suspect people have always wanted quiet time, but what's changed is how hard it's become to actually get it, with phones and constant notifications. So

it's less that we value it more and more that we're more aware of not having enough of it.

What actually changed

- **The extended answer questions the question itself before answering it.** "I'd actually push back slightly on..." is a natural, spoken way to disagree with a premise, which is a stronger move in Part 3 than accepting a framing and building on top of it.
- **A distinction ("less that we value it more, more that we're aware of not having enough")** replaces a flat yes — this is the same "narrow the claim before defending it" move from 3.1, applied to a comparison across time instead of a comparison between two methods.
- **The reasoning stays plausible without needing evidence the speaker doesn't have.** Nothing here claims a study or a statistic — it is a considered personal view, stated as one, which is exactly what Part 3 is asking for.

Is it becoming harder for people to switch off from work and daily pressures?

Short answer

Yes, I think it's harder now because of phones and social media.

Extended answer

I think so, yes — though I'd say it's less the technology itself and more the expectation that comes with it, that you should be reachable. My parents' generation could leave work at work because there was no way to reach them; now there's no technical reason not to reply to an email at nine at night, so the pressure is more about what people expect than what the phone can actually do.

What actually changed

- **The extended answer separates a cause from what people assume the cause is** ("less the technology itself and more the expectation") — the same disagree-with-the-premise structure used above, now applied to a different question, which shows the technique generalises rather than being memorised for one topic.
- **A concrete comparison ("my parents' generation... no way to reach them") makes an abstract claim about "pressure" tangible**, without inventing a named person or a specific story — a light, general comparison is enough to ground the point.

Part 4 — What keeps people at band 6



Read this after you have practised several topics out loud, not before. These habits are easy to recognise in yourself once you have heard your own answers a few times, and hard to spot from a list alone.

None of these are dramatic mistakes. A dramatic mistake is corrected the first time someone points it out. These survive because they sound like ordinary, reasonable speech.

4.1 The memorised opening

"Well, that's an interesting question, let me think about that for a moment." "I come from a small city in the north of my country, which is famous for..." "In my opinion, I think that..."

Rehearsed openers are easy to spot from the listener's side, because they arrive at the same speed and in the same shape regardless of what was

actually asked. Fluency and Coherence rewards responding to *this* question, and a stored opening was not built for this one.

The cost is not neutral. A rehearsed phrase creates a contrast with what comes after it, and the gap between the polished opening and the more natural answer that follows draws attention to itself.

The test. Could this exact sentence open an answer to a completely different question? If yes, it is not really an answer to this one.

What to do instead. A short, natural pause is not a problem — "hm, let me think" once, briefly, costs nothing. What costs marks is a full rehearsed paragraph standing in for actual thought.

4.2 The one-sentence answer

Technically correct, and nowhere to go. Look back at 0.3 — this is the failure that habit exists to fix.

The thirty-second fix. After any short answer, ask yourself one question: *why, or can you say more?* Add a reason. Add a specific detail. You do not need to be asked twice; do it every time, until it becomes automatic rather than deliberate.

4.3 Filling silence with filler

"Um... you know... like... it's, um..."

A little of this is completely natural in real speech, in any language. The problem is filler that replaces thinking rather than accompanying it — restarting the same sentence three times, or trailing off without finishing an idea.

What a natural pause sounds like. "That's a good question — I think..." — one short phrase, then a real answer.

What a stalled one sounds like. "It's, um, it's kind of, um, it depends, um..." with nothing concrete arriving after several seconds.

If you notice yourself doing the second one in practice, the fix is usually not "speak faster." It is having a plan — see 0.3's claim-reason-example habit — so you know where the sentence is going before you start it.

4.4 Answering the wrong-sized question

A one-line answer to a Part 1 question that invited more (4.2, above) is one direction of this mistake. The other direction happens in Part 2: spending the whole long turn on one bullet point and leaving no time for the rest of the card, or the reverse — racing through all four bullets so fast that none of them is developed.

What to do instead. During your one minute of planning, glance at how many bullets the card has and roughly how much of your speaking time each one should get. It does not need to be equal — 2.1's "describe a person" answer deliberately spends more time on the last bullet than the first three — but it should be a decision, not an accident of what you happened to think of first.

4.5 Losing the thread in Part 3

Starting to answer a discussion question, drifting onto a related but different point, and never returning to what was actually asked.

Part 3 questions are often more complex than they first sound, which makes drifting easy. The fix used throughout Part 3 of this book is the

same one: state your actual position early, in one clear sentence, before you start reasoning about it. If you can point to the sentence that answers the question, you have not lost the thread even if the explanation that follows wanders a little.

4.6 The two-minute check

Record yourself answering one question from anywhere in this book. Then listen back and check, in this order:

1. **Is there a sentence that states your actual answer?** If you cannot find one, the listener could not either.
2. **Did you add a reason or an example without being asked to?** This is the single habit from 0.3, and it is the fastest thing to check for.
3. **How many times did you restart a sentence from the beginning?** Once or twice is normal speech. Constantly is worth noticing.
4. **Were your sentences all roughly the same length and shape?** If every sentence could swap places with any other, that is where to add variety next time.
5. **Did you answer the question that was actually asked,** or a nearby one that was easier to talk about?

Do this with one recording a week rather than every single practice answer. Listening critically to yourself is useful in small, honest doses, not as a constant habit that makes you self-conscious while speaking.

Part 5 — Practice, and the last week



5.1 Nine prompts

Three for each part. All nine were written for this book — say them out loud, do not just read them.

There are no model answers here, and that is deliberate. You have seen ten model answers already, studied in detail. Reading a model for every one of these would mean practising your reading, not your speaking.

Part 1 — three short-question sets

Give yourself about 30 seconds to answer each question naturally, the way you would in an interview.

1. *Do you prefer spending time indoors or outdoors? Why?*
2. *What kind of weather do you like best?*
3. *Do you usually cook for yourself, or do you rely on other people for meals?*

Part 2 — one cue card

Give yourself one minute to plan, then speak for one to two minutes without stopping.

Describe a piece of advice someone gave you that you actually followed.

You should say:

- who gave you the advice
- what the advice was
- why you decided to follow it

and explain whether you think it was the right decision.

Part 3 — one discussion cluster

Give yourself a few seconds to think before each answer, the way you would in the real test — not several minutes.

1. *Do you think older people are generally better at giving advice than younger people?*
2. *Is it easier to take advice from someone you know well, or from a stranger?*
3. *Do people ask for advice less often than they used to?*

5.2 Record yourself, once

Pick one of the nine prompts above — the one you feel least confident about — and record your answer on your phone. Just one. Listen back

once, using the five checks in 4.6.

This is the part of practice this book cannot do for you. Everything else in these pages is about what to say; this is where you find out how it actually sounds coming out of your own mouth, which no amount of reading can substitute for.

5.3 The last seven days

If your test is next week, this is what is still worth doing.

Worth doing

- **Speak out loud, every day, even briefly.** Ten minutes of speaking practice beats an hour of silently reading model answers. Fluency is built by using it, not by reading about it.
- **Practise the claim-reason-example habit until it's automatic,** on ordinary questions — what did you eat today, and why; what did you do this weekend, and why. It should not require conscious effort by test day.
- **Record two answers and check them against 4.6.** Not more than two — this is a diagnostic tool, not a way to spend the whole week listening to yourself.
- **Practise timing your Part 2 answers.** Know roughly what one minute of speaking feels like, so you neither stop early nor run out of things to say.

Not worth doing

- **Memorising full answers to guess at topics.** See 4.1. A memorised answer to the wrong question is worse than a shorter,

genuine answer to the right one.

- **Learning long or unusual words this week.** A word you are not confident using naturally will slow you down or come out wrong under pressure, and slightly wrong costs more than the plain word you already own comfortably.
- **Worrying about your accent.** Pronunciation is one part of one of four criteria, and this late, it is not something you can meaningfully change. Spend the time on fluency instead.

On the day

Listen to the whole question before answering, including in Part 1 — a rushed answer to half a question is a version of 4.4's mistake. Pause briefly if you need to. A short, real pause costs you nothing; a rehearsed sentence covering for one costs more.

The end

You now know what the four criteria are, how the three parts fit together, what "extending an answer" actually means in practice, and which habits are holding you at the score you're at now.

That is genuinely most of it. The rest is speaking — out loud, recorded occasionally, checked honestly against Part 4.

Good luck with the test.

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