

**IELTS TEST DAY**

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# **Frequently Asked Questions for IELTS**

**By [ielts-jonathan.com](http://ielts-jonathan.com)**



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EXAMS**



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Please feel free to contact me via the contact page on [www.ieltsjonathan.com](http://www.ieltsjonathan.com) with any comments or questions you may have. I value your feedback.

Happy Reading and Warm Regards.

Jonathan



## GENERAL QUESTIONS

**When should I use pencil, and when should I use a pen in the test?**

For the first two papers – listening and reading – you **MUST** write in pencil. For writing, you can use either pencil or pen.

**How important is spelling?**

Strangely, it is more important in listening and reading than writing. In listening and reading, any answer with a spelling mistake is wrong. In writing, you lose some marks for bad spelling, but not so many.

**Does it matter if I use American or British English spelling?**

No. Both are correct. And even if you mix US and British English spellings (eg by writing “colour” but “organize”), you do not lose marks.



## GENERAL QUESTIONS

**What about capitals – do I lose marks if I forget to use capital letters for proper nouns (months, country names etc) in the listening or reading tests?**

Strangely, in these two sections, you won't lose marks for non-capitalisation.

**If I do badly in one part of the test, can I retake just that part, or do I have to take the whole test again?**

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It's not possible to just retake part of the test – you have to retake the whole test.

*NB If a student has visual or learning difficulties they may be allowed extra time for the test. Dyslexic students need to provide documentary proof of their learning difficulty, and must give the test centre 3 months' notice before taking the test.*



## READING QUESTIONS

**Can I use a marker/highlighter pen in the reading test?**

No. You can use a pencil to underline key points/vocab, but no marker pens.

**Does it matter if I “get unlucky” and have reading passages which are about topics I don’t know about?**

No, it shouldn’t make any real difference. The reading test is not a test of your previous knowledge of a subject – it tests how well students can extract information from texts, by reading quickly, knowing synonyms and parallel expressions, and guessing skilfully.

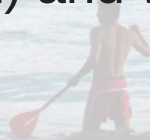


## WRITING QUESTIONS

### Which writing question should I answer first – Task One or Task Two?

Some teachers advise lower level students who may struggle to finish both tasks (and who perhaps shouldn't be doing the test yet, but that's another issue) to begin with Task Two since it is worth more marks, to ensure they complete it properly.

With students who are reasonably competent this is more debatable – Max argues the greater weight given to Task 2 means it should always be written first and more thoroughly. Other teachers say students should spend the correct amount of time on each task (20 mins for T1, 40 for T2) and write comprehensive answers for both.



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## WRITING QUESTIONS

**Do I need to learn all the possible topics or questions for the writing test?**

No – it isn't possible to predict what will come up, as the possibilities are too varied. But of course it is good to have good knowledge of vocabulary related to topics, as well as general academic vocabulary.

**Do I have to use lots of linking words in the writing test?**

Not as many as you think. It is useful to use some to organise your work, but actually, a lot of advanced or native speaker writers use very few – their organisation is clear through their use of pronouns, referencing and other more subtle methods.



## WRITING QUESTIONS

**Is there a limit to the number of words I can write in the writing test?**

No. You lose marks if you fail to reach the minimum number (150 words for Task 1, 250 for Task 2), but there is no penalty for writing too many. However, it shouldn't be necessary to write a huge number – quality is the key, not quantity.

**Can I write completely in capitals?**

It's a strange thing to do, but there is no rule against it. The examiner might feel (s)he's being shouted at, though!

**Can I memorise an introduction or conclusion that would be suitable for any topic?**

No. Students lose marks for any scripts which are memorised. Examiners can tell if students have done this.

## SPEAKING QUESTIONS

**What should I do in part 2 and 3 of the speaking test if I get questions about topics which I don't know about?**

Don't panic. If your part 2 question is about something you have no experience of, just try to find something you can say about it. If you come from a culture where you don't have pets, for example, and the question asks you about a pet you'd like to own, you could say that it is not normal in your culture, that you've never really thought about this, but that you have been amazed by how much the English love their cats and dogs, and that you find this hard to understand, etc etc. Or talk about a friend of yours who has a pet or wants to have one. Also, buy yourself a few seconds by saying "That's a difficult question. Let me see/think....", particularly in part 3.



## SPEAKING QUESTIONS

**Is it better to stop and correct myself if I make a mistake, or should I just keep talking?**

If you know you've made a mistake, it's good to quickly correct it, then continue speaking. But don't spend too long on it if you are confused. The examiner is looking for correct use of grammar and vocabulary, but also for fluency.

**How long do my answers need to be?**

In part one, not monosyllabic but not over about 30 seconds – a full answer but not a monologue.

In part two students should try to get close to two minutes if possible, rather than just the minimum one minute.

Part three has complex questions which require some thought and detail, so a minute per answer is alright.

The examiner might interrupt the student to ask follow-up questions or to change the direction of the discussion.

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**Good Luck!**



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### Downloads

- Information for candidates - English UK (PDF, 2 MB)
- Information for candidates - English US (PDF, 2 MB)
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- Information for candidates - Simplified Chinese (PDF, 1 MB)
- Information for candidates - Spanish (PDF, 988 kb)
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I hope the information provided is useful.

*Good Luck*

**JONATHAN**

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