

# IELTS

## Speaking Band Descriptors

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# IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors

## Scoring criteria for Academic and General Training tests

| Band Score | Fluency and coherence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Lexical resource                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Grammatical range and accuracy                                                                                                                                                                      | Pronunciation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9          | <p>Fluent with only very occasional repetition or self-correction.</p> <p>Any hesitation that occurs is used only to prepare the content of the next utterance and not to find words or grammar.</p> <p>Speech is situationally appropriate and cohesive features are fully acceptable.</p> <p>Topic development is fully coherent and appropriately extended.</p>   | <p>Total flexibility and precise use in all contexts.</p> <p>Sustained use of accurate and idiomatic language.</p>                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Structures are precise and accurate at all times, apart from 'mistakes' characteristic of native speaker speech.</p>                                                                             | <p>Uses a full range of phonological features to convey precise and/or subtle meaning.</p> <p>Flexible use of features of connected speech is sustained throughout.</p> <p>Can be effortlessly understood throughout.</p> <p>Accent has no effect on intelligibility.</p>                                                   |
| 8          | <p>Fluent with only very occasional repetition or self-correction.</p> <p>Hesitation may occasionally be used to find words or grammar, but most will be content related.</p> <p>Topic development is coherent, appropriate and relevant.</p>                                                                                                                        | <p>Wide resource, readily and flexibly used to discuss all topics and convey precise meaning.</p> <p>Skilful use of less common and idiomatic items despite occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation.</p> <p>Effective use of paraphrase as required.</p> | <p>Wide range of structures, flexibly used.</p> <p>The majority of sentences are error free.</p> <p>Occasional inappropriacies and non-systematic errors occur. A few basic errors may persist.</p> | <p>Uses a wide range of phonological features to convey precise and/or subtle meaning.</p> <p>Can sustain appropriate rhythm. Flexible use of stress and intonation across long utterances, despite occasional lapses.</p> <p>Can be easily understood throughout.</p> <p>Accent has minimal effect on intelligibility.</p> |
| 7          | <p>Able to keep going and readily produce long turns without noticeable effort.</p> <p>Some hesitation, repetition and/or self-correction may occur, often mid-sentence and indicate problems with accessing appropriate language. However, these will not affect coherence.</p> <p>Flexible use of spoken discourse markers, connectives and cohesive features.</p> | <p>Resource flexibly used to discuss a variety of topics.</p> <p>Some ability to use less common and idiomatic items and an awareness of style and collocation is evident though inappropriacies occur.</p> <p>Effective use of paraphrase as required.</p>             | <p>A range of structures flexibly used. Error-free sentences are frequent.</p> <p>Both simple and complex sentences are used effectively despite some errors. A few basic errors persist.</p>       | <p>Displays all the positive features of band 6, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 8.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6          | <p>Able to keep going and demonstrates a willingness to produce long turns.</p> <p>Coherence may be lost at times as a result of hesitation, repetition and/or self-correction.</p> <p>Uses a range of spoken discourse markers, connectives and cohesive features though not always appropriately.</p>                                                                                                          | <p>Resource sufficient to discuss topics at length.</p> <p>Vocabulary use may be inappropriate but meaning is clear.</p> <p>Generally able to paraphrase successfully.</p>                                | <p>Produces a mix of short and complex sentence forms and a variety of structures with limited flexibility.</p> <p>Though errors frequently occur in complex structures, these rarely impede communication.</p>       | <p>Uses a range of phonological features, but control is variable.</p> <p>Chunking is generally appropriate, but rhythm may be affected by a lack of stress-timing and/or a rapid speech rate.</p> <p>Some effective use of intonation and stress, but this is not sustained.</p> <p>Individual words or phonemes may be mispronounced but this causes only occasional lack of clarity.</p> <p>Can generally be understood throughout without much effort.</p> |
| 5          | <p>Usually able to keep going, but relies on repetition and self-correction to do so and/or on slow speech.</p> <p>Hesitations are often associated with mid-sentence searches for fairly basic lexis and grammar.</p> <p>Overuse of certain discourse markers, connectives and other cohesive features.</p> <p>More complex speech usually causes disfluency but simpler language may be produced fluently.</p> | <p>Resource sufficient to discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics but there is limited flexibility.</p> <p>Attempts paraphrase but not always with success.</p>                                            | <p>Basic sentence forms are fairly well controlled for accuracy.</p> <p>Complex structures are attempted but these are limited in range, nearly always contain errors and may lead to the need for reformulation.</p> | <p>Displays all the positive features of band 4, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 6.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 4          | <p>Unable to keep going without noticeable pauses.</p> <p>Speech may be slow with frequent repetition.</p> <p>Often self-corrects.</p> <p>Can link simple sentences but often with repetitious use of connectives.</p> <p>Some breakdowns in coherence.</p>                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Resource sufficient for familiar topics but only basic meaning can be conveyed on unfamiliar topics.</p> <p>Frequent inappropriacies and errors in word choice.</p> <p>Rarely attempts paraphrase.</p> | <p>Can produce basic sentence forms and some short utterances are error-free.</p> <p>Subordinate clauses are rare and, overall, turns are short, structures are repetitive and errors are frequent.</p>               | <p>Uses some acceptable phonological features, but the range is limited.</p> <p>Produces some acceptable chunking, but there are frequent lapses in overall rhythm.</p> <p>Attempts to use intonation and stress, but control is limited.</p> <p>Individual words or phonemes are frequently mispronounced, causing lack of clarity.</p> <p>Understanding requires some effort and there may be patches of speech that cannot be understood.</p>               |

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| Band Score | Fluency and coherence                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Lexical resource                                                                                                                                                         | Grammatical range and accuracy                                                                                           | Pronunciation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3          | <p>Frequent, sometimes long, pauses occur while candidate searches for words.</p> <p>Limited ability to link simple sentences and go beyond simple responses to questions.</p> <p>Frequently unable to convey basic message.</p> | <p>Resource limited to simple vocabulary used primarily to convey personal information.</p> <p>Vocabulary inadequate for unfamiliar topics.</p>                          | <p>Basic sentence forms are attempted but grammatical errors are numerous except in apparently memorised utterances.</p> | <p>Displays some features of band 2, and some, but not all, of the positive features of band 4.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 2          | <p>Lengthy pauses before nearly every word.</p> <p>Isolated words may be recognisable but speech is of virtually no communicative significance.</p>                                                                              | <p>Very limited resource. Utterances consist of isolated words or memorised utterances.</p> <p>Little communication possible without the support of mime or gesture.</p> | <p>No evidence of basic sentence forms.</p>                                                                              | <p>Uses few acceptable phonological features (possibly because sample is insufficient).</p> <p>Overall problems with delivery impair attempts at connected speech.</p> <p>Individual words and phonemes are mainly mispronounced and little meaning is conveyed.</p> <p>Often unintelligible.</p> |
| 1          | <p>Essentially none.</p> <p>Speech is totally incoherent.</p>                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>No resource bar a few isolated words.</p> <p>No communication possible.</p>                                                                                           | <p>No rateable language unless memorised.</p>                                                                            | <p>Can produce occasional individual words and phonemes that are recognisable, but no overall meaning is conveyed.</p> <p>Unintelligible.</p>                                                                                                                                                     |
| 0          | Does not attend / Does not complete the test                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

Notes:

- (i) A candidate must fully fit the positive features of the descriptor at a particular level.
- (ii) A candidate will be rated on their average performance across all parts of the test.