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IELTS essentials

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The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a global standardised exam of proficiency in the English language. It is immensely popular with many local institutes. Despite a large number of training centres and an abundance of resources available online, confusion is still prevalent among many regarding the kind of strategy that should be adopted when it comes to preparing for the examination.

Unfortunately, this article does not guarantee a score of 8 once you finish reading it contrary to the advertisements you keep seeing in random streets of Dhaka, but I promise to lessen your confusion.

The test has two modules, Academic and General Training, with the former pertaining to students aiming for higher studies overseas and the latter required for immigration purpose. Both the modules are broken down into four significant parts with slight changes in the formats.

LISTENING

The common denominator in most IELTS audio clips is voices with thick and heavy accents. Thus, frequently listening to Australian and British accents will help you enhance your ability to pick up the correct answer easily.

It is easy to lose concentration but one should be focused throughout the whole

segment. Tricky parts are always involved which try to make the examinees think they have figured out the right answer, whereas that may not be the case.

Besides reading the questions thoroughly, reading the instructions is of paramount importance as well. There might be different specifications for the subdivisions of the listening part and such technicalities are marked with utmost stringency. For instance, you may be asked to keep your answers within a limited number of words, or to answer in letters. Questions may require you to answer in either yes/no or true/false, and mixture of the two even if they denote the same meaning will cause the candidate to lose marks.

READING

There is no substitute to developing faster reading skills if you want to score high in this section. My personal suggestion would be to scan through the passages, read the questions and then referring back to the passages to find out the answers. You have to pick up the key, familiar words from the paragraphs that you came across in the question.

Some may be a bit too overconfident and skip getting any practice altogether. However, it is important to familiarise oneself with the pattern of the question and especially to go through the practice tests. You may be able to understand the format and ace the exam on the very first try, but the component that will be the

greatest challenge to overcome would be the time management.

Also, the reading passages for General Training (GT) and Academic Module are different with GT having a comparatively easier question pattern but with a stricter scoring policy.

WRITING

Just like the reading section, exactly one hour is allocated here. Divided into two tasks, the former carries one third of the marks with the latter carrying two-thirds.

For the Academic Module, task one is all about data analysis and comparison. A mistake that people often make is drawing their own conclusions from the data or illustrations provided, but that is redundant. Thus, the good news is, you only have to describe all the information given in an articulated fashion. For the GT, task one is simply a letter. Even though the tone and context differs, the structure remains the same.

Task two of writing is my personal favourite, because here, you get to pretend to have two personalities and debate it out on the papers.

Familiarise yourself with an argumentative essay format because that carries a lot of marks. The art of constructing topic sentences and all other sentences in general is crucial.

A vital thing to remember is to picking a side in the argument. You will have to conclude by siding with only one face of

the coin, not both.

SPEAKING

This section, although the shortest, is also the most feared section for many.

Interviewees tend to get nervous while speaking face to face with the examiner. It is divided into three sections again, with varying length of answers. The cue-card section from this tends to make candidates the most nervous as they have to give a speech on a certain topic within a time crunch.

Proper body posture, the ability to maintain eye contact and usage of formal words throughout the interview is integral for speaking.

In order to tackle this section like a pro, you can practise by recording yourself while trying to finish your speech within the time constraint. If maintaining eye contact makes you nervous, try to practice in front of a mirror.

IELTS is, at the end of the day, a language proficiency exam and so stepping up your English game is mandatory. Enhancing your lexical resources, coherence and fluency will help you ace that exam. Just keep surrounding yourself with English in both formal and informal scenarios and rise above the fear!

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