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Part 1

IELTS Speaking Part 1: simplify

Your priority in part 1 of the speaking test should be to demonstrate **fluency**, not difficult grammar or vocabulary. You'll speak **more fluently** if you keep your part 1 answers simple.

Here are some examples of how I would simplify students' answers.

Note: the students' answers contain some mistakes.

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Student's answer:

Logically people from different generation will have taste variation. Depending upon the maturity, music stars of their own age, impact of globalisation as well as technological development in music industry will divide younger and older generation.

My simplified answer:

Of course, people from different generations **have different tastes in music**. Popular music changes all the time, and most of us are influenced by **whatever style of music** is popular when we are growing up.

Student's answer:

Yes, I am fond of music. It is simply the medicine for my mind. When I am stressed, music remove stress. When I am happy, music inspires me to be more. It always in the centre of all my parties with friends. When I am sad, music takes me out glue and move forward.

My simplified answer:

Yes, I love music, mainly because it **helps to put me in a better mood**. When **I'm stressed** or **sad**, music **picks me up** and puts me **in a positive frame of mind**

IELTS Speaking Part 1: negative answers

Here are some *negative* answers to the 'photography' questions that I showed you a couple of weeks ago. The questions come from Cambridge IELTS 11.

1) What type of photos do you like taking?

Well, I don't usually take photos to be honest. I prefer to enjoy whatever I'm doing, rather than stop to **take a photograph**.

2) What do you do with photos you take?

I don't really do anything with **the occasional** photos that I take. They just stay on my phone and I forget to save them or **upload them to my computer**.

3) When you visit other places, do you take photos or buy postcards?

Neither. As I said, **I prefer to enjoy myself**, so **I tend to** let other people take photos. I used to buy and send postcards when I was younger, so maybe I should go back to doing that.

4) Do you like people taking photos of you?

As a child I was **always a bit shy** when it came to having my photo taken, **so I would have said that** I didn't like it. These days, if someone wants to take a photo of me, I don't mind at all.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'future' answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions that I showed you last Friday. I've pretended to be a scientist instead of an English teacher!

1. What job would you like to have ten years from now?

I'd like to think that I'll be doing the same job in ten years' time. **I like being a scientist**, so I can't imagine changing **profession**.

2. How useful will English be for your future?

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English is essential in my field of work; most of the research that is being done in this area is published in English, so I read articles and papers in English every day.

3. How much travelling do you hope to do in the future?

I'd like to see more of the world, so it would be nice to be able to travel extensively at some point, maybe when I'm retired.

4. How do you think your life will change in the future?

Hopefully I'll make progress in different areas of my life, for example at work and in terms of my home life. I'm also interested to see what new technologies come along in the next decade or two.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'travel habits' topic

Remember that Part 1 questions are supposed to be easy. Just give a simple answer and a reason.

1. What form of transport do you prefer to use? Why?

I prefer to travel by car because it means that I have my own space. Also, the buses and trains in my city are usually overcrowded; my car is much more comfortable.

2. How much time do you spend travelling on a normal day?

I probably spend about an hour and a half travelling to and from work. I travel during the rush hours, so there is quite a lot of traffic.

3. What do you do while you are travelling?

I usually listen to the radio or a CD. In the morning I like to listen to the news to find out what is happening in the world.

4. Do you ever have problems with transport?

Yes, as I said, I get stuck in traffic on my way to and from work. I used to get annoyed by traffic jams, but now I'm used to them.

A few important points:

- In the answer to question 4, can you see the difference between "I used to" and "I'm used to"?
- Notice the good vocabulary: 'have my own space', 'overcrowded', 'to and from work', 'rush hour', 'find out what is happening in the world', 'get stuck in traffic'.
- If the examiner asks a question that you have already answered, just say "as I said" and repeat your answer.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'neighbours' topic

Here are some part 1 questions from Cambridge IELTS book 8, with my sample answers. How would you answer these questions?

1. How well do you know the people who live next door to you?

I know my neighbours quite well. They're really nice people, and I always stop to talk whenever I see them.

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2. How often do you see them?

I see my neighbours at least a few times a week. We usually see each other when we're leaving for work in the morning or coming home in the evening.

3. What kinds of problem do people sometimes have with their neighbours?

I think the most common problem is probably noise. It's difficult to live next to people who have a dog that barks at night, or who play loud music.

4. How do you think neighbours can help each other?

Neighbours can do little things like watching your house if you go on holiday or taking a delivery if something arrives by post when you're not at home. I think these little favours are a good way for neighbours to help each other.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'age' answers

Here are my sample answers for the questions that I shared last week.

1) Are you happy to be the age you are now?

Yes, I'm quite happy at my current age, although I wouldn't mind going back to when I was younger. It would be nice to relive some of my memories from childhood.

2) When you were a child, did you think a lot about your future?

Not really. I remember thinking about the near future - about exams and things in the year ahead - but I didn't worry too much about adulthood.

3) Do you think you have changed as you have got older?

Yes, in some ways I'm a completely different person now, compared to when I was younger. I think my personality has changed quite a lot, and I'm more open and relaxed.

4) What will be different about your life in the future?

Who knows? Hopefully, my life won't change much over the next decade or so, but after that I can't really imagine or predict.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'singing' answers

Here are my sample answers to the 'singing' questions that I shared last week. Remember: there's no need to show off in part 1. It's more important to demonstrate your fluency at this stage. Try to give short, simple answers without too much hesitation.

1. Did you enjoy singing when you were younger?

No, I was never much of a singer. I remember that I was always a little shy and embarrassed when it came to singing in front of others.

2. How often do you sing now?

I don't sing in public, but I do sometimes find myself singing along to songs if I'm listening to music in the car. Perhaps this happens once a week or less.

3. Do you have a favourite song you like listening to?

No, not at the moment. I used to have favourite songs when I was a teenager - when I was discovering new music - but these days I prefer to listen to a variety of music, rather than a particular favourite tune.

4. How important is singing in your culture?

It seems to be really important these days. TV programmes like 'X Factor', which are basically singing contests, are hugely popular at the moment. So many young people dream of being famous singers.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'walking' topic

Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and 'to the point'. Here are my example answers for some questions about walking:

1. Do you like walking?

I'm not one for going on really long walks in the countryside, but I don't mind walking when I'm in a town or city, for example when I'm sightseeing in a new place.

2. Do you think walking is important?

Yes, I think it's important to be active, and walking is the most basic physical activity that we can do.

3. Do you think walking in the countryside is better than walking in the city?

Personally, no. As I said before, I like walking in the city, especially if it's somewhere with a lot of history like London or Paris.

4. What could be done to improve the experience of walking in cities?

I suppose the main issues are space and safety. Pavements need to be wide enough to accommodate lots of pedestrians, and we need safe places to cross the street.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'art' topic, negative answers

Have a look at my answers to the four questions below. My aim was to demonstrate that it's fine to give negative answers in part 1 of the speaking test.

1. Did you enjoy doing art lessons when you were a child?

No I didn't. I was never very good at drawing or painting, and I found art lessons quite slow and boring. I preferred language and science lessons.

2. Do you ever draw or paint pictures now?

No, I don't draw or paint these days, because there's never any need for me to create art at work, and I still don't enjoy art as a hobby.

3. When was the last time you went to an art gallery or exhibition?

I honestly can't remember the last time I went to any kind of art exhibition; I'm not much of an art fan, and I tend to go to music concerts, the cinema or the theatre instead of art shows.

4. What kind of pictures do you like having in your home?

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I don't have any paintings or artistic images in my home, but I do have photos of family members and some nice photos of landscapes on the walls to brighten the place up.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'public transport' answers

Here are my answers to the questions that I showed you last Friday:

1) Do you use public transport? Why / why not?

These days I mostly drive, and the main reason is that my usual journeys are much faster by car. For example, the half-hour drive that I do twice a week would take me three times as long by train and bus.

2) Which type of public transport do you prefer? Why?

I definitely prefer the train. I like being able to stroll up and down, and on some trains I can book a seat with a table and a socket, so that I can do some work.

3) How good is the public transport where you live?

It's quite good. There's a train station not far from my house, and it's a direct line straight into the city centre. There are lots of bus routes too, and there's even a tram network in the centre of Manchester.

4) Do you think people should use public transport more? Why / why not?

Yes, as long as it's convenient for them. Public transport is obviously more environmentally friendly than private cars, so we could reduce air pollution by using it more.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'rain' answers

Here are my answers to the 'rain' questions from last Friday's lesson. Remember: there's no need to show off in this part of the speaking test, so short, simple answers are best.

1) Do you like rain? Why / why not?

No, not at all. It rains far too often in Manchester, where I live, and I'm fed up of it; I wish we had more sun!

2) Do you think that rain affects people's mood?

Yes, definitely. I think rainy days and grey skies can be a bit sad and depressing. Where I live, people are much more cheerful when the sun comes out.

3) Does it often rain where you live?

Yes, unfortunately it does. As I said, Manchester is known for being a rainy place; you can't trust the weather here, because it can cloud over and start raining at any moment.

4) Have you ever been caught in the rain without a coat or umbrella?

Yes, many times. Just last week I went out without an umbrella and got soaked; I did have a coat on, but it didn't really help.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'numbers' topic

In last week's [speaking lesson](#) I gave you 5 simple rules for your part 1 answers. Here are some more example answers in which I follow those rules:

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1) Do you have a favourite number or a number that is special to you?

Yes, my favourite number is... because it's the day I was born on, and **it's my lucky number.**

2) Do any numbers have special importance in your country?

Yes. The number 7, for example, is supposed to be a special number in my country. It appears in so many places, like the seven days of the week, the seven main notes in music, and the seven ages of man that Shakespeare described.

3) Are you good at remembering numbers? Why / why not?

No, I'm not very good at remembering numbers. I don't think it's necessary to learn them by heart; I just save them on my phone.

4) What numbers do people often have to memorise?

The most important number to remember on a daily basis is **the pin number** for your bank **card.** Without this you can't pay for anything or get cash out

IELTS Speaking Part 1: strange topics, easy answers

Don't worry if the questions in part 1 of the speaking test seem strange. Just give a direct answer and a reason as usual. For example:

'Robots' topic:

1. What do you think of robots?

I think robots are a **clever idea.** I'd love to have a robot that could speak to me and do things for me!

2. Did you watch any cartoons related to robots in your childhood?

I can't remember watching cartoons with robots, but I remember that I liked the robots in films like Star Wars.

3. Do you like the idea of robots helping you at home or driving your car?

Yes, definitely. **It would be great** to have a robot helper at home, and I like the idea of driverless cars - I think driving would be safer if cars were controlled by robots.

.....

'Shoes' topic:

1. Do you like to buy expensive shoes?

No. I tend to buy average-priced shoes **because I'm more interested in comfort than expensive brands.**

2. When you buy shoes, do you prefer convenience or style?

I mainly **look for comfort and convenience.** But obviously **I consider the style too,** because I do choose shoes **that match the clothes I wear.**

3. Why do you think some people buy many pairs of shoes?

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I suppose they either like following the latest fashions, or they want a pair of shoes to match all of the different clothes or outfits that they have.

4. *Have you ever bought shoes online?*

No, I haven't. I always like to try shoes on before I buy them, to make sure that they fit properly and feel comfortable.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'holidays' answers

Here are my sample answers for the questions that I asked you to look at last week. As usual, my part 1 answers are short and simple.

Remember that the priority in part 1 is to answer "fluently", not to show off your best language (you can do that in parts 2 and 3).

1) *Do you like holidays? Why / why not?*

Yes, I love holidays because I get the chance to take a break from work, to relax and unwind, and to spend time with my family.

2) *Do you prefer to travel or stay at home during holiday periods? Why?*

If I can I prefer to travel. It's nice to get away from everything and to have a change of scenery. Also, I like visiting new places and doing some sightseeing.

3) *What do most people do during their holidays in your country? Why?*

During the summer especially, I think most British people go somewhere hot and sunny, to escape from the British weather!

4) *When do you prefer to take your holidays? Why?*

I like taking my holidays just outside the main summer season, which is July and August. If you go on holiday in May, June or September, everything is cheaper and places aren't so crowded with tourists.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'chocolate' answers

Here are my sample answers for the 'chocolate' topic. Remember that your priority in speaking part 1 is to demonstrate fluency by giving answers that are short, direct and natural, without hesitating too much.

1) *Do you like chocolate? Why / why not?*

Yes, I love chocolate. I like the taste, the texture and the feeling that you get when you eat it. And it goes really well with my favourite drink, coffee.

2) *What type of chocolate do you prefer? Why?*

I prefer dark chocolate to milk chocolate, because it has a stronger taste. I also like chocolate when it's in a cake, and I love drinking hot chocolate too.

3) *When do you usually eat chocolate?*

I try not to eat too much, but I probably eat or drink something that contains chocolate every couple of days.

@vuttq

4) *Do people give chocolate as a present in your country? When?*

Yes, it's very common to give boxes of individual chocolates as a gift. You can give chocolates on any special occasion really: birthdays, Valentine's day, Easter, Christmas, and so on.

Note:

To see my corrections for the sentences in yesterday's lesson, look in the "comments" area below that lesson.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'name' answers

Here are some sample answers for the 'name' questions that I shared last week. Notice that most of these answers are negative ones; it's completely acceptable to answer in this way.

1) *How did your parents choose your name?*

To be honest, I'm not sure how they chose it; I've never asked them. I suppose it was just a name that they both liked, and maybe they thought it suited me.

2) *Does your name have any special meaning?*

It might do, but I don't know what that meaning is; I've never looked it up. Maybe I'll google it later today; you've made me curious to find out!

3) *Is your name common or unusual in your country?*

Yes, it's quite a common name. I remember that there were two other people with the same name as me in my class at school.

4) *If you could change your name, would you?*

No, I definitely wouldn't. My name is part of my identity now, and it would feel strange to suddenly change it. I don't think my friends and family would like that either.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'free time at home' answers

Here are some example answers for the questions that I shared last week. Remember to focus on fluency in part 1. Try not to hesitate; just say the first thing that comes into your head.

1) *How much time do you spend at home?*

Obviously I sleep at home, but I don't spend very much time at home during the day, because I'm usually busy with work.

2) *Do you prefer to spend your free time at home or outside the house?*

During the day I prefer to be out of the house, so I like visiting family or meeting up with friends. But I do like relaxing at home in the evenings.

3) *What do you do when you have some free time and you're at home?*

I usually sit and watch some TV or a film, or I listen to some music. I also like sitting outside if the weather is nice.

4) *Would you like to have more spare time to spend at home in the future?*

@vuttq

No, not really. I get bored if I'm at home for too long. In the future, I imagine I'll still prefer to go out and do things rather than stay indoors.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'house' topic

Examiners often begin the speaking test by asking about your home. Here are some typical questions and sample answers.

1) Do you live in a house or an apartment?

I live in a semi-detached house with three bedrooms and a small garden.

2) Which room do you like most in your house? Why?

My favourite room is the kitchen because it looks out onto the back garden, and it's on the side of the house that catches the afternoon sun.

3) Is there anything about your house that you would like to change?

Well, it would be nice if it were a detached house so that we could have windows on the wall that we currently share with our neighbours.

4) Tell me something else about your house.

The previous owners converted the loft into an extra bedroom; that's the quietest room in the house, and the best place to go to do some work.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: negative answers

Here are my negative answers to the questions in last week's [lesson](#):

1) What type of photos do you like taking?

Well, I don't usually take photos to be honest. I prefer to enjoy whatever I'm doing, rather than stop to take a photograph.

2) What do you do with photos you take?

I rarely take photos, but if I occasionally use my mobile phone to take a picture of something, I just leave the photo there; I don't do anything special with it.

3) When you visit other places, do you take photos or buy postcards?

I don't really do either. I leave it to my friends or other family members to take photographs; I'm usually with someone who likes taking photos and can share them with me later.

4) Do you like people taking photos of you?

No, I prefer not to be in photos. I always feel awkward when someone asks me to smile for the camera, and I don't think I'm very photogenic.

Note:

It's usually easier to give positive answers, but it's worth practising some negative responses just in case you get a topic that doesn't interest you. Whatever the question is, the easiest way to answer is to tell the truth!

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'mathematics' topic

@vuttq

Here are some recent exam questions that somebody shared here on the blog. As usual, my part 1 sample answers are short, direct and simple.

1) At what age did you start studying mathematics?

I can't exactly remember, but it was probably **in my first year at primary school** when I was 5 years old. I probably **learnt simple addition at that age.**

2) Do you like mathematics? Why / why not?

I don't dislike maths, but I wouldn't say that I've ever really liked the subject either. I'm happy **to do simple calculations**, but my **brain can't cope with the complex stuff!**

3) Is it necessary for everyone to learn mathematics?

Yes, I think it is. **We all need** a basic grounding in maths so that we can do **daily tasks**, like managing our money, working out bills, and so on.

4) Do you prefer to use a calculator when doing mathematics?

It depends. I quite like exercising my brain with anything that's easy enough, but I use the calculator on my phone for anything **tricky.**

IELTS Speaking Part 1: negative answers

Here are my negative answers to the questions in last week's speaking lesson. Remember: I'm imagining that I don't like (or know about) the topic.

1) Do you like music?

No, I don't really like music, and I don't listen to it. It's not something that I've ever been interested in.

2) What kind of music did you listen to when you were young?

I can't remember listening to much music as a child either. I suppose I must have heard some **traditional music** at festivals or parties, but I didn't take much notice of it.

3) When was the last time you went to a concert?

I've never been to a music concert. Maybe I should try going to one; **perhaps it would be interesting** to see an orchestra playing classical music.

4) Would you like to participate in a live music show?

No, definitely not. I don't play a musical instrument and I don't sing, so I can't imagine that I'd ever find myself performing to an audience.

Note:

My aim here is to show you that you can answer questions about any topic - you don't need to like it or know anything about it. (I do like music by the way!)

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'study' answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions in last week's lesson.

1. Do you like studying? Why / why not?

@vuttq

Yes, I like studying because it's the best way to **gain a deeper insight into** any subject. I like reading, learning from others, and trying to understand difficult concepts.

2. Do you prefer to study alone or with others? Why?

I prefer to **study alone** because I need to be able to **concentrate fully**. Other people are a distraction.

3. Where do you prefer to go when you need to study? Why?

I like to **find a quiet corner** in my local library; being in an old building and **surrounded by books** seems to help me to focus on my work.

4. How do you feel if someone disturbs you when you are studying?

It frustrates me because **it breaks my concentration**. I prefer to avoid distractions by going somewhere where nobody **will interrupt me**.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'cooking' topic

Here are some recent part 1 questions, with my example answers.

1. Do you like cooking? Why / why not?

Sometimes. I like preparing a special meal for family or friends who visit, but everyday cooking is a bit boring; it's something **that has to be done**, but it's **not really fun**.

2. Who did the cooking in your family when you were a child?

My mother almost always did the cooking when I was young. I don't think she trusted my father to make a nice meal.

3. Do you think that it's important to know how to cook well?

I'm not sure whether it's important to cook *well*, **but I do think** that everyone **should know the basics**. It definitely isn't healthy to rely on **pre-prepared meals or fast food**.

4. Do you think that children should be taught cookery at school?

Yes, that's probably a good idea. If all children knew how to cook a few basic, healthy meals, that would **surely be a good thing**.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'collecting' answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions from last week.

1) Have you ever collected anything as a hobby? (What?)

Yes. When I was younger I used to collect keyrings. I remember that my favourite was a Lego man keyring that someone bought me as a present.

2) What kinds of thing do people often like collecting?

Some people collect cheap **items like stamps, keyrings or toys**. Others collect expensive antiques, **watches, jewellery or even cars**.

3) Why do you think people collect certain objects?

@vuttq

Maybe they like the constant **search for a new item**, or they want to remember past experiences. Others might like the feeling of organising and **presenting what they own**.

4) Is there anything that you would like to collect in the future?

Yes. If I could afford it, I'd love to have a collection of guitars in different colours, shapes and sizes!

IELTS Speaking: 'maps' answers

Here are my sample answers for last week's questions about maps. Remember that my answers are short and simple because this is what the examiner requires in part 1 of the test.

@vuttq

1. Do you ever use maps?

Yes. Whenever I go somewhere new, I plan my journey with the help of a map.

2. When do people usually need to use a map?

I imagine that some people use a map every day if they travel to different places for work. Others might only use a map when they're on holiday.

3. Do you prefer electronic or paper maps?

I still prefer paper maps for a long journey; I like being able to open the map out on a table and see the full journey ahead.

4. Do you ever ask people for directions instead of using a map?

Only if I'm really lost. Whenever I ask for directions, I find it difficult to remember what the person said. So I prefer to find my own way.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'parks' answers

Here are my sample answers for last week's questions. Remember that part 1 answers are supposed to be short and direct. You don't need to 'show off' in this part of the test!

1. Do you like parks? Why / why not?

Yes, I like parks because they're great places to relax or go for a walk. I think every city needs some green space where people can escape from the crowds.

2. How often do you visit parks?

There's a park very close to where I live, so I probably go there once or twice a week if the weather's nice.

3. Why are parks an important part of many towns and cities?

Parks are like an oasis where people get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. They are where people go to have lunch, to take some exercise, or to forget about work for a while.

4. What do you think could be done to make parks better?

The parks in big cities are already really good in my opinion. If I think about the famous parks in London, Paris or New York, I can't imagine what I would do to improve them.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: sample answers

Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and direct; the examiner will interrupt you if you don't. Here are my sample answers to the 'house or apartment' questions from two weeks ago:

1. Do you live in a house or an apartment?

I live in a semi-detached house with three bedrooms in a suburb of Manchester. I've lived there for just over a year.

2. Which is your favourite room in your home? Why?

I don't really have a favourite room. But if I had to choose, I'd say the living room because that's where I go to sit and relax.

@vuttq

3. Would you change anything about your home? Why / why not?

Yes, I've been meaning to redecorate it since I moved in last year. It needs a new kitchen, so that's what I'd change first.

4. Would you like to move to a different home in the future?

Yes, I'd definitely move again at some point if I could afford to. I'd like to live in the countryside, or maybe in a different city or country.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: games

Here are my sample answers to last week's questions:

1. What games are popular in your country?

Well, **if we can consider** sports as games, then football is definitely the most popular game in my country, but we also love **board games** like chess.

2. Do you play any games?

Not regularly these days. I play the occasional game of tennis with my brother-in-law, and I recently played a bowling game on the Nintendo Wii with my nephew. I wasn't very good at it.

3. How do people learn to play games in your country?

I think children teach each other to play games. I remember a friend at primary school teaching me to play chess, for example.

4. Do you think it's important for people to play games?

Yes, it's really important, **especially for children**. I think research has shown **that play can improve brain development**, intelligence, **creativity**, and the ability to cooperate with others.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'reading' topic

Here are some part 1 questions with example answers. Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and simple.

1. Do you like reading?

Yes, I like reading a lot. I read all sorts of things, including novels, newspapers, magazines, and online articles.

2. Do you usually read for leisure or for work purposes?

Well, I have to do a certain amount of reading as part of my job, but I probably read more for enjoyment. I pick up a newspaper most days, and I usually have a book on the go.

3. What was your favourite book or story when you were a child?

The first book that I remember really enjoying was '.....'. **It only took me** a few days to read because I liked it so much that I couldn't put it down.

4. Do you think it's important that children read regularly?

Definitely. I think reading is possibly the most important skill that children learn. The ability to read **opens the door** to all aspects of education.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: home town

Here are some part 1 questions and answers on the topic of 'home town'. Try changing the answers to similar ones about your own town or city. Keep your answers short, simple and direct.

1. Where are you from?

I'm from Manchester, which is a city in the north west of England.

2. Do you like your home town? (Why?)

Yes, I like living in Manchester because it's **where most of my friends live**, and because there are plenty of things to do there. The only thing I don't like is the weather.

3. Would you prefer to live somewhere else? (Why?)

For the moment I'm happy living here, but at some point I'd like to live in a country with a warmer climate, and I'd like to live near a beach!

4. Do you think your home town is a good place for young people? (Why?)

Yes, Manchester has lots of things for young people, such as sports facilities, music and cinemas.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: giving negative answers

It's fine to give negative answers in part 1 of the speaking test. Here are some example negative answers for people who don't like sport:

1. What sports or physical activities do you regularly do?

Unfortunately I don't have time to **do any sports** or physical activities because of my work commitments. I'd like to find more time **for regular exercise**.

2. Which sport or game would you like to be good at?

I'd like to be good at tennis. It must be great to be able to hit the ball as hard as you can and watch it land exactly where you wanted it to.

3. Do you prefer watching or playing sports?

I don't watch much sport on TV and **I'm not a big sports fan**, so I think I would probably **enjoy doing sports** more than watching them.

4. Do you think children should be encouraged to do more sport?

Yes, I think that sport is really important for children. Sports and games **teach children to play together and try their best**.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'shopping' topic

Here are some questions and sample answers for the 'shopping' topic. Remember that part 1 answers need to be short, direct and simple.

1) Who does most of the shopping in your household?

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There isn't one person who does most of the shopping. I'd say it's a shared responsibility because we tend to go shopping together as a family.

2) What kind of shopping do you like doing?

I quite like shopping for presents for people's birthdays or for Christmas. My favourite type of shop would have to be a bookshop.

3) Is shopping a popular activity in your country?

Yes, it's very popular. Saturday is the busiest shopping day, and lots of people treat shopping as a kind of leisure activity, rather than something practical.

4) What types of shops do teenagers like best in your country?

I'm not an expert on teenage behaviour, but I guess they like buying clothes, music, gadgets... that kind of thing.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'toys' topic

I've already done lessons about 'toys' for [part 2](#) and [part 3](#) of the speaking test, so let's try some part 1 questions about this topic. Notice that my part 1 answers are always short and direct.

1) Did you play with toys when you were a child?

Yes, of course. I loved playing with toys when I was a child; I think all children do.

2) What kinds of toys did you like?

As far as I remember, I mostly played with toy cars, planes and action figures from films or cartoons. I also liked building things with Lego.

3) In your country, do boys and girls play with the same types of toys?

Not really. I think boys like the kinds of toys that I mentioned before, whereas girls play with dolls. My niece, for example, doesn't like toy cars; she prefers dressing dolls in different outfits.

4) Do you think that toys help children to learn?

Yes, I do. All toys encourage children to use their imagination and creativity. Even with simple toys, children imagine situations and invent games and rules.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'telephoning' topic

Here are some part 1 questions and sample answers from Cambridge IELTS book 9. Remember to make your part 1 answers short and simple. Just give a direct answer, followed by a reason or one extra piece of information.

1. How often do you make telephone calls?

I probably make three or four phone calls every day, usually just to make arrangements with work colleagues or to speak to family and friends.

2. Who do you spend most time talking to on the telephone?

@vuttq

I think it would be one of my closest work colleagues. We often call each other rather than meeting face-to-face.

3. When do you think you'll next make a telephone call?

My family are expecting me to phone **them as soon as I finish this exam**. They'll want to know **how it went**.

4. Do you sometimes prefer to send a text message instead of telephoning?

Yes. I prefer to send a text message when I'm arranging something simple, like a time to meet someone. In those situations, a phone call isn't necessary.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'friends' topic

In part 1 of the IELTS speaking test, remember to keep your answers short and simple. Here are some example questions and short answers:

1. Are your friends mostly your age or different ages?

Most of my friends are about **the same age as me** because we met at school or university. I've got one or two friends who are older or younger than I met through work.

2. Do you usually see your friends during the week or at weekends?

I **tend to meet up with** my friends at weekends because everyone's too busy during the week.

*3. The last time you saw your friends, what **did** you do together?*

It **was** one of my friends' birthday last weekend. Six of us **went** out for a meal to celebrate.

4. In what ways are your friends important to you?

I think it's important to have friends that **you can talk to** and **share experiences with**. My friends **make me laugh**, but I know **I can also rely on** them **whenever I need help or support**.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: musical instruments

For IELTS speaking part 1, remember to give short, simple answers. Answer the question with a full sentence and give a reason for your answer. Here are some example questions and answers about musical instruments (from Cambridge IELTS book 6):

1. Which musical instrument do you like listening to most? (Why?)

My favourite musical instrument to listen to is the guitar. I like the fact that there are different types of guitar, like classical, acoustic and electric. I love the variety of sounds a guitar can make.

2. Have you ever learned to play a musical instrument?

I took some guitar lessons when I was younger and still have a guitar at home. I don't play it much nowadays. I wish I had more time to practise.

3. Do you think children should learn to play an instrument at school?

Yes, I think it's a great skill **and it's really enjoyable** to be able to play a musical instrument. All children should be given this opportunity.

4. How easy would it be to learn to play an instrument without a teacher?

It would probably be more difficult without a teacher. You need someone to show you what to do and correct your mistakes. You need a lot of discipline to teach yourself.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: clothes

1. Are clothes and clothing fashions important to you? (Why/Why not?)

No, clothes and fashions are not really important to me. I tend to wear clothes that are comfortable and practical rather than fashionable.

2. What different clothes do you wear for different situations?

Well, I have to dress quite formally for work, so I wear a shirt and trousers. At home I prefer to wear jeans and a T-shirt, and on special occasions I might wear a suit.

3. Do you wear different styles of clothes now compared to 10 years ago?

No, not really, because I don't follow fashion. I think I have dressed in a similar way for the last 10 years.

4. Do you think the clothes we wear say something about who we are?

Yes, they probably do. Some people are really careful about what they wear because they want to be seen as stylish. Other people wear clothes that show wealth or status, such as clothes by famous designers.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'communication' topic

Here are some more examples for IELTS speaking part 1. Remember to give short, easy, direct answers.

1. How do you usually keep in touch with members of your family?

I mostly keep in touch with my family by phone, and I've started using the Internet to make video calls. I also try to visit members of my family in person as often as I can.

2. Do you prefer to speak to people by phone or by writing emails?

It depends on the situation. I use email and text messages to communicate with friends, but my parents prefer it if I phone them.

3. Do you ever write letters by hand? (Why / Why not?)

No, I don't write letters by hand because it's so much easier to send an email that will arrive immediately.

4. Is there anything you dislike about mobile phones?

Well, I don't like listening to other people's conversations in public places, and I don't like it when someone's phone rings in the cinema or during a lesson.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: negative answers

How do you answer questions about a topic that you are not interested in? For example, many people have no interest in dancing, so what should they say?

My advice: just tell the truth. It's fine to say you don't like something. Read my examples below:

@vuttq

1. Do you like dancing?

No, I don't like dancing. I'm not a big music fan, and dancing just makes me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious.

2. Has anyone ever taught you to dance?

No, I've never been interested in learning to dance, so I've never taken any lessons or asked anyone to show me how to do it.

3. Do you think that traditional dancing will be popular in the future?

I'm afraid I have no idea because I don't follow what's happening in the dancing world! I suppose it will always be popular with some people.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'work' topic

Here are some example questions with short, direct answers. Remember that part 1 is like a warm-up; you are not expected to give long, complex answers for this part.

1. Do you work or are you a student?

I'm a qualified doctor, but at the moment I'm studying English so that I can work in this country.

2. Do you enjoy your job?

Yes, I really enjoy my job. Ever since I was a child I have always wanted to be a doctor; I've always wanted to be able to help people.

3. What's the best thing about your job?

The best thing about my job is that I can make a difference in people's lives. It's a great feeling to see someone recover after an illness because my colleagues and I were able to help.

4. Do you prefer working alone or with others? Why?

In a hospital you have to work as part of a team. I've got used to working with others, and I think you can achieve a lot more as a team than you would alone.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: 'accommodation' topic

Here are some questions that I found on the official IELTS website, ielts.org. The answers below are my examples. Remember to keep your part 1 answers short and simple. You don't need to show off in part 1.

1. Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in.

I live in a house that has a living room, a kitchen, two bedrooms, a bathroom and a small garden. It's not a very big house, but it's just right for me.

2. How long have you lived there?

I've lived there for about five years. It's the first house that I've owned; before that I was renting an apartment.

3. What do you like about living there?

@vuttq

I like living there because I think the house reflects my personality: I decorated it myself, I chose all the furniture, and everything is where I want it to be.

4. *What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in?*

If I could, I'd buy a bigger house near a beach or in the mountains, preferably somewhere with a warm climate.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: emails and handwriting

At work or in your studies, do you often write things?

Yes, I write a lot of emails as part of my job. I work for a company that has offices in several countries, so we use email to communicate.

How often do you send e-mails?

I probably write between 5 and 10 work emails every day, and I send emails to friends or family a few times a week.

Do you prefer to write by hand or on a computer?

It depends what I'm doing. I prefer the computer for most things because it's faster and you can save or copy things, but I still like making notes or writing ideas down by hand.

Do you think computers might one day replace handwriting?

No, I think we will always write by hand as well. I think it's an important skill, and schools will continue to teach children to write by hand before they learn to type.

IELTS Speaking Part 1: laughing

The following questions are taken from Cambridge IELTS 7, page 55. The aim in part 1 is to give *short, simple* answers. Don't worry about using 'difficult' grammar.

1. *What kinds of thing make you laugh?*

I laugh most when I'm with friends talking about funny things that have happened to us. I also like watching comedians and comedy films.

2. *Do you like making other people laugh?*

Yes, it's a nice feeling when you can make someone laugh because you can see that you've made them happy. It's great to share a funny moment with someone.

3. *Do you think it's important for people to laugh?*

Yes, of course. It's important to see the funny side of things; humour helps us not to take life too seriously. I think that laughter is good for our health.

4. *Is laughing the same as feeling happy?*

It's not exactly the same because you can be happy without laughing, and sometimes we laugh when something bad has happened; a sense of humour can help us to cope with difficult situations.

Part 2

IELTS Speaking: a recorded example

Describe an interesting place you have visited.

You should say:

- *where it is*
- *what you can do there*
- *and why you think it's an interesting place.*

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a place

In part 2 of the speaking test, you might have to describe a place. There are several possible questions about places. For example:

1. Describe a place you have visited.
2. Describe a historic place.
3. Describe a holiday.
4. Describe a place you would like to visit.
5. Describe somewhere you have lived or would like to live.

My advice is to prepare a description of one place that you could use to answer all of these questions. Then search the Internet for some good vocabulary.

For example, here are some ideas I found to describe London:

- Adjectives: it's exciting, busy, hectic, cosmopolitan, multicultural, unique. It's historic but modern at the same time, it's a thriving, prosperous city, it's fashionable, lively, fun...
- Activities: London is famous for its history, culture, art, museums. Tourists go there to see Big Ben, The Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square etc. You can get a fantastic view of the city from the 'London Eye'. It's also famous for its theatres and shows in the West End, its shops, restaurants and nightlife. There are endless things to see and do.
- Negatives: London is expensive, crowded, stressful, polluted. The underground system is dirty, travel is overpriced and unpleasant. The cost of living is high (shopping, house prices etc.), the locals are always in a hurry and can be unfriendly, there are social problems (like you can find in most big cities).

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a festival

A common topic for the short presentation (IELTS Speaking Part 2) is "describe an important festival in your country".

My advice is to look for a description of your festival on Wikipedia. Copy the best parts of the description and make small changes if necessary. As an example, I've copied a short description of Christmas from Wikipedia.

Describe a festival: Christmas

Christmas is an annual holiday that, in Christianity, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

Popular customs of the holiday include gift-giving, music, an exchange of greeting cards, church celebrations, a special meal, and the display of various decorations; including Christmas trees, lights, nativity scenes, and holly. In addition, Father Christmas (known as Santa Claus in some areas) is a popular figure in many countries, associated with the bringing of gifts for children.

Over the Christmas period, people decorate their homes and exchange gifts. In some countries, children perform plays re-telling the events of the Nativity, or sing carols that reference the event. Christmas, along with Easter, is the period of highest annual church attendance.

A special Christmas family meal is an important part of the celebration for many, and what is served varies greatly from country to country. In England and countries influenced by its traditions, a standard Christmas meal includes turkey, potatoes, vegetables, sausages and gravy, followed by Christmas pudding, mince pies and fruit cake.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'describe a book' answer

*Describe a book that you enjoyed reading because you had to think a lot.
You should say:*

- what this book was
- why you decided to read it
- what reading this book made you think about
- and explain why you enjoyed reading this book.

Here's my band 9 answer, using vocabulary from last week's [lesson](#):

- I'm going to talk about a book that really made me think, and that has had a positive effect on my life. The name of the book is 'Atomic Habits', and it's about the compounding effect that small decisions and minuscule changes can have on people's lives.
- I decided to read Atomic Habits after seeing an interview with the book's author, James Clear, who is a world-renowned expert in the field of habit formation. In the interview, he told inspiring stories and revealed some simple life hacks that can make people more productive, motivated and happy. I found the whole idea of the 'science of tiny habits' fascinating, and so I bought the book straight away.
- While reading the book, I was forced to confront my own habits and behaviours. I realised that I'm nowhere near as productive as I could be, but that some small tweaks to my routine could make a significant and long-lasting difference. The book also gave me a framework to understand how good habits are formed and how bad habits can be broken. It has encouraged me to analyse my own habits accordingly.
- I thoroughly enjoyed reading Atomic Habits because I thought it was well researched, well reasoned and well written. The author's ideas and advice aren't simply his opinions; they are taken from cutting-edge research and real success stories. I enjoy reading books that change my way of thinking in some way or give me practical, life-altering ideas, and this was definitely one of those books.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'bad service' answer

@vuttq

Here's the task that I showed you last week:

Describe a time when you were not satisfied with a service.

You should say

- *what the service was*
- *who provided it*
- *what happened*
- *and explain why you were unhappy with the service.*

And here's my band 9 sample answer:

I'm going to describe a time when I experienced poor service from staff in a restaurant. This happened a couple of months ago, when some family members, who live abroad, came to stay. We decided to visit **a nearby town**, and at some point everyone was a little hungry, so we thought we would have a bite to eat.

The first restaurant that we came across looked perfect. It had plenty of empty tables - we hadn't booked in advance - and we were all happy with the menu. But as soon as we walked through the door, things started to go wrong, and we weren't at all impressed with the attitude of the staff.

After standing around for a few minutes waiting for someone to greet us, I managed to attract the attention of a waitress who told me that we had come into the restaurant through the wrong door. So, I went over to the main door, only to be told by the manager that there were no tables free for a party of our size - there were eight of us. I could see several free tables with four seats, so I suggested simply moving two of these tables together. But the manager was adamant that this was impossible; our only option was to divide the family and sit at two separate tables.

By this time, some of my family members were getting fed up. The restaurant was half empty, yet we were being treated as if they didn't need customers. We decided we didn't want to sit at separate tables or stay in a place where **we felt unwelcome**. We left, feeling disappointed by how dismissive the restaurant manager had been, and fortunately we found a **much friendlier place** to eat just around the corner.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: essential preparation

IELTS Speaking Part 2: educational TV programme

Describe an educational television programme that you liked.

You should say

- *what the programme was about*
- *when and where you saw it*
- *how you found out about this programme*
- *and why you liked it.*

Here's my band 9 answer. Can you see any 'less common' vocabulary?

- I'm going to talk about one of **my favourite educational TV programmes**, which is a nature documentary called 'Planet Earth'. There were eleven **episodes** of this programme, and each one featured a different habitat on Earth, such as mountains, caves, deserts and jungles. The aim of the 'Planet Earth' series was to take the

viewer into those habitats, using spectacular footage of interesting animals, plants and landscapes.

- I first saw 'Planet Earth' on television when it was broadcast by the BBC several years ago. I think it was shown every Sunday evening, which was the perfect time to watch a fascinating nature programme. Then, a few years ago, somebody bought me the DVD box set of the whole series as a Christmas present, and I watched the episodes again.
- I found out about this TV programme because it was advertised repeatedly in the weeks before it was first aired. The TV trailers were really eye-catching because they showed incredibly beautiful images of nature. I also recognised the voice of the narrator of the programme, the well-known naturalist David Attenborough. It was these trailers that persuaded me to watch the first episode.
- What I liked most about the 'Planet Earth' series was its stunning photography and its global scope. For example, in the "Fresh Water" episode, they showed us the giant salamander in Japan, crocodiles in the river Nile, and river dolphins in the Amazon. I was amazed at how they had managed to film such interesting creatures in so many locations. I enjoyed learning about strange animal species, and the programme opened my eyes to the hidden wonders of our planet.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'interesting house' answer

Describe an interesting house or apartment that you have visited.

You should say

- where the house or apartment was
- who lived there
- what it looked like on the outside and/or inside
- and explain why you found this house or apartment interesting.

Here's my sample band 9 answer, using ideas from last week's [lesson](#):

- I'm going to describe an apartment that I recently visited in the city centre of Manchester. The apartment was on the 10th floor of a brand new block that has just been built. This building is on the edge of the main commercial area of the city, and the apartment overlooks several of Manchester's busiest shopping streets.
- Nobody was living in the apartment when I went there, because it had only just been put on the market. I went to see it with a friend who is thinking of moving to Manchester; he wanted to view some different properties, and I decided to go along and see what the newest apartments were like.
- From the outside, the apartment was in a tall, shiny glass building - nothing too remarkable. On the inside, as far as I remember, there weren't many different colours: the walls were an off-white colour, the floors were done in whitish tiles, and the kitchen appliances were all silver metal coloured. I think the kitchen surfaces were made from dark grey granite. The main feature, in terms of the look of the apartment, was the huge floor-to-ceiling window in the living room, which allowed the sunlight to flood in.
- Although the white and silver decor wasn't really to my taste, I did like the fact that the apartment seemed so cool, clean and spacious. I particularly liked the open-plan kitchen and living room, which had all sorts of gadgets that could be operated by a mobile phone app. For example, I learnt how to use the app to

control the lighting, heating, blinds, security cameras and even the cooker. I found it fascinating that the apartment contained so much up-to-the-minute technology, and that everything seemed to be connected via wifi. It felt like I was taking a glimpse into the future.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'describe a photo' answer

Describe a photograph of you that you like. You should say

- *where the photo was taken*
- *what you were doing when it was taken*
- *who took it*
- *and explain why you like the photo.*

Here's my full answer using the vocabulary ideas from [this lesson](#):

- The photograph **that immediately comes to mind** when I think of one that I like is my university graduation photo. It was taken just before the graduation ceremony that marked the end of my undergraduate degree. You can't see anything in the background of the photo, but it was actually taken in the students' cafe next to the hall where the ceremony was held.
- In the photo, I'm wearing the **traditional clothing for university graduates**: a black gown and an academic cap, which is often called a mortar board. I'm also holding my **rolled-up degree certificate**. Obviously this was a formal portrait photo, and so **I was standing still, smiling and looking into the camera.**
- The person who took the photo was a professional photographer. He had been hired by the university to set up in the cafe and take photos of graduates before the ceremony. He had a white screen, some lighting devices, and an assistant who took payments and collected our details.
- The reason why I like my graduation photo is that it reminds me of a pivotal moment in my life. Being presented with my degree certificate at the graduation ceremony was the culmination of four years of hard work, and it marked the end of the 'education' stage of my life. I had achieved my objectives and made my family proud, and I knew that the next step was to look for my first proper job. Whenever I look at the photo it brings back happy memories, both of my university days and of the relief and contentment that I felt on my graduation day.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'maths lesson' answer

Here's the task that I showed you last week:

Describe something important that you learned in a maths lesson at primary school.

And here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to talk about learning the multiplication tables for the numbers 1 to 12, which I remember doing in the penultimate year of primary school, when I was maybe 9 years old. As children, we called these the 'times tables'.
- As far as I remember, we started with the number 2, and we learnt to multiply this number by each of the numbers from 1 to 12. Our teacher taught us to go through the tables speaking aloud; for example: 1 times 2 is 2, 2 times 2 is 4, 3 times 2 is 6 etc. We gradually worked our way through the tables for all of the numbers, and

we learnt the answers by heart. I think the teacher also gave us regular tests to make sure that we had learnt the tables properly.

- I'm not sure whether I really understood at the time why it was important to learn the 'times tables' by rote. But I think I enjoyed the challenge, and I was keen to get good marks in our tests. I also liked my teacher and wanted to do well for her.
- Many years later I realise how important it is to have the basic multiplication tables ingrained in my mind. It's useful to be able to do quick calculations without having to think. Recently, for example, I needed to multiply 6 by 7 for some reason - I can't even remember why - and the answer 42 just popped into my head. Another instance that I can think of is when I'm calculating bill payments, earnings and savings over a 12-month period, and I find myself using the '12 times table'. In these situations, I'm glad that my primary school teachers were so insistent about learning to multiply by heart.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: public transport anecdote

Describe a time you travelled by public transport. You should say

- *what type of public transport you used*
- *where you travelled from and to*
- *what you did during the journey*
- *and explain how you felt about travelling in this way*

I've tried to give my answer (below) in the form of an 'anecdote':

I'm going to describe a train journey that I took last year between Manchester and London. I've made the same journey many times, but I'll never forget this particular time because something happened that I wasn't expecting.

It was a Sunday morning and I was due in London that afternoon. There was no traffic at all as I drove in to Manchester, and I was expecting a nice, peaceful trip on a half-empty train. But my first surprise came when I tried to print my prepaid ticket at one of the ticket machines: there wasn't a reserved seat number on my ticket, which meant that I would have to find an available seat. I was still wondering about this when I heard loud voices and singing coming from the main station concourse. Suddenly I realised what was happening - I was going to be on a train full of football fans travelling to a big match!

Luckily I managed to find a seat before the train filled up. However, the noisy fans made sure that I couldn't concentrate on any work; I couldn't even read the newspaper without being interrupted by laughter, singing and football stories. In the end, I just sat and relaxed with a cup of coffee, watching and listening to the excited fans.

All in all, it wasn't a bad journey; I love travelling by train and at least I had a comfortable seat so that I could sit back and relax for a couple of hours. I would have preferred a quieter trip, but the football fans were all friendly and good-natured, so I can't really complain. Even so, I made sure that I avoided them on the way home later that day!

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'tree' description

Here's the question that we've been looking at recently:

*Describe a plant, flower or tree that is famous or important in your country.
You should say*

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- *what type of plant, flower or tree it is*
- *where it grows or is usually seen*
- *how it is used in your country*
- *and why it is famous or important*

And here's my answer, using the plan from [this lesson](#):

- I'm going to talk about oak trees, and I'll also describe a specific example of a famous oak tree called the Major Oak. This is a huge tree in Sherwood Forest; it's thought to be around 1000 years old, and I'd probably say that it's the most impressive tree that I've ever seen.
- Oaks are very common in England; they can be seen in fields and areas of woodland in the countryside, but they are also commonly found in parks and gardens in towns and cities. The Major Oak is in Sherwood Forest, which is near Nottingham. It stands out from the other oak trees because its trunk and branches are so wide and thick.
- The wood from oak trees is used to make furniture; for example, I have an oak table, wardrobe and various other pieces of oak furniture at home. Oak is a strong and reliable wood that has traditionally been used in construction, for beams and other parts of the framework of houses and other buildings. The Major Oak obviously hasn't been used in this way; it's a tourist attraction that people visit and marvel at. For example, I went to see it on a school trip as a child.
- The oak tree is important in England because it symbolises history, strength and reliability - probably because of its traditional role in construction. The Major Oak is famous for a completely different reason: it was supposedly Robin Hood's hideout, so it has a kind of legendary or mythical status because of the stories that are associated with it. For this reason, and because of its age and unusual size, the Major Oak has become known as Britain's favourite tree.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'sports centre' answer

Reading the comments below last week's [lesson](#), I can see that almost everyone chose to describe a sports centre. So here's my sample 'sports centre' description:

- The place of entertainment that I wish we had close to where I live is a sports centre. My ideal sports centre would have a gym, swimming pool, indoor and outdoor football pitches, courts for tennis, badminton and squash, and an all-purpose area for things like gymnastics and circuit training.
- I can think of the perfect place for this facility: There's a disused piece of land just down the road from where I live, where an old warehouse was knocked down. It's near to the main road and the train station, so it would be easy for people to get to. There are plans to build houses on this plot of land, but I think a sports centre would be much better for local residents.
- The good thing about a sports centre is that everyone can use it. There could be sports lessons and clubs for children and teenagers - things like swimming lessons and football team practice sessions. I'm sure many adults in my local area would join the gym, use the pool, and book the courts for games of tennis or badminton. The centre could even hold sports events, such as competitions, that would attract spectators as well as participants.

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- I think we need a good sports centre where I live because people currently have to travel to the next town if they want to find some of the facilities, activities, lessons and clubs that I've mentioned. I think a sports complex would give young people, in particular, something fun and productive to do in the evening and at weekends. Playing sport keeps people healthy and makes them feel happy, so I think a sports centre would brighten up my local area and improve our quality of life.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'countryside' answer

Describe an enjoyable day out in the countryside that you had.

You should say

- *where you went on this day out*
- *who you were with*
- *what you did*
- *and explain why you enjoyed the day*

Here's my sample answer for the task above. I've tried to use most of the phrases from [this lesson](#).

I'm going to describe a recent trip to a lovely place called the Tissington Trail. The Tissington Trail is a path or track that follows the route of a former railway line through beautiful countryside in the county of Derbyshire, here in the UK. The old railway line was taken up many years ago, and it was transformed into a recreational trail that is ideal for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

I went to the Tissington Trail because we had some family members, my brother and sister-in-law and their daughter, staying with us over the weekend. They had come up to Manchester from London, and they wanted my wife and me to take them somewhere where they could breathe in some fresh countryside air and get away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

To reach the trail we had to park in Tissington itself, which is a charming, picturesque village. We hired some bicycles there and set off along the trail. It was an easy ride because the trail is mostly flat, with just a few gentle dips and inclines, and we were able to enjoy the stunning scenery as we passed through areas of woodland, a dramatic limestone ravine, and grassy meadows that were covered with colourful wild flowers.

The part of the day that I enjoyed the most was when we cycled through a historic railway tunnel on our bicycles. The tunnel has been fitted with a sound installation that plays eerie steam train noises as you pass through it; we all loved the idea that the sounds transport you back in time, and that you feel like you're on an old steam train with its whistles and clunking machinery. It was a really nice day out, and we all enjoyed relaxing in the village tearoom at the end of our bike ride.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'good service' answer

Last week I gave you a list of "theme" vocabulary for the question below.

Describe a time when you received good service in a restaurant or cafe.

You should say

- *when this was*
- *what kind of restaurant or cafe you were in*

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- *why you were there*
- *and why you thought the service was good*

Here's my sample answer with the theme vocabulary underlined:

- I'm going to talk about the service we received in a restaurant where a friend of mine celebrated his birthday last Saturday evening.
- My friend had decided to book a table in a local Italian restaurant for the party. It was a small, family-run place, but this made it feel all the more welcoming and inviting. The atmosphere was great and the service was excellent.
- As I mentioned, I went to the restaurant because a friend had invited me to celebrate his birthday there. There were about ten of us there - mostly people I've known since university - and it was really nice to catch up with them and chat about what we had all been up to since we last got together.
- The service was good because the restaurant staff and owners really made us feel at home. From the moment we walked in, the waiters were polite, approachable and attentive; nothing was too much to ask. They brought out a cake with candles and sang 'Happy Birthday' to my friend, although we hadn't asked them to do this, and the restaurant owners kept checking whether we were happy with everything, which was thoughtful of them. All in all, the delicious food, good company and friendly service made it an unforgettable evening.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'cafe' answer

*Describe a café that you have been to.
You should say*

- *where it is*
- *why you went there*
- *what you ate or drank*
- *and explain why you liked or disliked the café.*

Here's my sample band 9 answer:

- I'm going to describe a café that I go to maybe once a week. It's just down the road from where I live, near Manchester, so it's really convenient for me to walk down there for a coffee or a bite to eat, and to use the wifi.
- The last time I went to this local café was on Friday afternoon. I was trying to do some work at home, but I found myself getting distracted by little jobs around the house. So I decided to have a change of scenery; I put my laptop in its bag and made the short walk to the café, where I spent the next few hours getting all of my work done. With a nice cup of coffee and just the right level of background noise, I found it much easier to concentrate.
- Over the course of the afternoon, I drank two cups of coffee and a glass or two of water. The café owner takes a lot of pride in making the best 'flat white' coffee in the area, so that's what I tend to drink. If I remember correctly, the second coffee that I ordered was a decaf, because I try to avoid drinking too much caffeine in the

afternoon. I didn't have anything to eat on that occasion, but I do sometimes have one of the home-made cakes that they sell.

- There are a few reasons why I like going to my local café. I suppose the main reasons are the coffee, the free wifi and the friendly staff. However, on Friday I also managed to sit at my favourite table near one of the windows, and the café wasn't very busy. So the atmosphere and noise level were just right, and I was able to focus on my work without distractions for most of the afternoon.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'busy' answer

Describe a time when you were really busy. You should say

- *when this was*
- *why you were so busy*
- *how you managed the situation*
- *and explain how you felt at the time.*

Here's my full band 9 answer to this question:

- I'm going to talk about the time I left a university assignment until the last minute and had to work flat out to get it finished. This was about ten years ago when I was doing my Master's degree.
- I had to do several 3000-word assignments for the modules on my Master's course, but I remember that there was one in particular that I really struggled with. I had been procrastinating and putting it off for weeks, and in the end I left myself just two days to get the whole assignment done. This included finding and reading **relevant books and articles**, deciding on my thesis and assignment title, and producing a final draft which had to be handed in to the department office before the deadline.
- The pressure of such a close deadline actually forced me to manage the task in a really efficient way. My first step was to decide on the general area that I wanted to write about, and then I limited myself to just ten research sources. I printed the most relevant pages, highlighted the key paragraphs and made some notes to summarise and synthesise the ideas that I found interesting. Finally, I just started writing the main body of the assignment, and I wrote the title and the introduction last.
- I had mixed feelings at the time. I was annoyed with myself for **leaving** it so late to get started on the assignment, but I was relieved and quite impressed with myself when I managed to complete the final draft so quickly. It was also quite stressful and tiring to have to find articles, do photocopying and then write everything so quickly. I wouldn't want to go through that again!

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'proud' answer

Read my full answer to the 'proud' task below. If you have time, note down the good words and phrases that you find.

*Describe something you did that made you feel proud of yourself.
You should say*

- *what you did*
- *when you did it*

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- *why you felt proud of what you had done*
- *and explain how you felt when this happened.*

One of my proudest achievements was completing my undergraduate degree at the university of (name). The key moment that I remember was when I received my final exam results; I was delighted to have passed with better scores than I expected.

I graduated from university in (year). As far as I recall, we received our final exam results in May and the graduation ceremony was in July. Our exam scores for individual course modules were posted on the noticeboard in the corridor of the university department, and I remember getting into the lift in the department one morning, knowing that I would soon see my results.

The particular moment when I really felt overjoyed and proud of what I had achieved was when I saw my exam results on the department noticeboard. This was the precise point in time when I realised that I had passed and that my hard work had paid off. I was proud because I had overcome some setbacks earlier in the course, and I had proved to myself that I could achieve my goals.

As I approached the department noticeboard I felt really nervous but also excited; I knew that the moment of truth was just seconds away. And when I saw my final exam results I was surprised, thrilled and relieved all at the same time. I didn't shout out with joy, but I think I probably clenched my fist and said "yes" to myself. I certainly remember walking back down the corridor with a spring in my step, feeling elated and knowing that four years of study were finally over.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: clothing answer

Describe a piece of clothing that you like wearing. You should say

- *what the item of clothing is*
- *where and when you bought it*
- *when you wear it*
- *and explain why you like wearing it.*

Here's my sample answer, using the vocabulary from last week's [lesson](#):

- I'm going to describe a coat that I often wear at the moment. The coat is dark blue in colour, and it's made out of a lightweight, waterproof material, which makes it perfect for wearing at this time of year here in the UK. It also has a detachable hood, which I used yesterday when it was raining, and various pockets on the outside and on the inside.
- I bought the coat last year at the beginning of autumn when the weather started to get colder. It was easy to buy because I had had the exact same coat before; my old coat was starting to look a bit worn out, so I decided to buy a new version. As I knew which size I needed, I simply went online and found the best offer; I bought it through a shopping website, and it was delivered to my house a few days later.
- As I said, I'm wearing this coat a lot at the moment. It's my everyday coat for going to work or for when I go out shopping or for any other reason.
- The reason why I like this coat is that it's so practical and functional. It's waterproof and it keeps me warm, but it also comes in handy for carrying things like my phone, wallet, loose change, a pen, and even a notebook; I tend to fill my

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pockets with whatever I can. It even folds up small enough to fit in my bag when I don't need it.

Note: I missed out the words 'multipurpose' and 'hard-wearing material'. Can you suggest how we could add these words to the description?

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'hurry' answer

Let's return to the 'hurry' question that I showed you a few weeks ago:

Describe a time when you had to do something in a hurry.

You should say

- *what you were doing*
- *when this was*
- *why you had to hurry*
- *and explain how you felt at that time*

Here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to talk about a time when I had to hurry to get ready for a trip with some colleagues while I was working in a previous job.
- It was a Monday morning about five years ago. A group of us had to catch an early flight, and a senior member of our department had volunteered to drive us to the airport. I was supposed to be ready and waiting to be picked up from my home at 5.30am, and my colleague had asked me to look out for his car so that he didn't have to ring my doorbell.
- The problem was that I overslept. I had set my alarm, but somehow I must have turned it off and carried on sleeping. Suddenly, at 5.30am, my doorbell rang and I looked over at my alarm clock. I immediately realised what had happened, and I sprang out of bed and got dressed in record time. I splashed some water on my face, quickly brushed my teeth, and put my shoes on without properly tying the laces. Then I picked up my suitcase and coat, and left the house.
- I can still remember the moment when the doorbell woke me up and I saw the time: I was filled with a sense of panic and fear as I realised that my colleagues were waiting outside. Then, when I left my house and walked towards the awaiting car, I felt so embarrassed because it was obvious that I hadn't been ready on time.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: expanded answers

Last week we looked at the first half of a question:

Describe a long walk that you enjoyed.

You should say

- *when you went on this walk*
- *where it took place*

I explained that it would be easy to give a very short answer to these two points:

"Last summer I walked along a beach during my holiday in..."

But we need to expand this answer to include more information about "when" and "where". For example:

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When

I'm going to describe a walk that I enjoyed last summer while I was on holiday on the south coast of England. It was the first week of August, and we set off on the walk on the first morning of the holiday just after breakfast, at around 9 o'clock. The walk took us the whole morning and finished at lunchtime.

Where

As I mentioned, the walk took place on the south coast of England. I was on holiday with my family in a place called Dorset, and we were staying in a rented house. Our aim was to walk from the house to a place called Durdle Door beach. First we had to find the coast path, and then we followed this path for several miles until we reached Durdle Door and finally descended the steep steps that led to the beach.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'local area' answer

Describe a change that you would like to see in your local area.

You should say

- what the change would be
- who would be involved in making the change
- how it would be done
- and why you would like to see the change happen.

Here's my band 9 sample answer:

- The change that I'd like to see in my local neighbourhood is the pedestrianisation of the main shopping street in the town centre. I'd like to see traffic diverted around this area in order to make it safer and more attractive for visitors and shoppers. Most of the traffic that clogs up the main street is just passing through the town, but it's the local people who have to put up with the congestion, noise and pollution.
- It's the job of the local council to make changes like the one I'm suggesting. But before the council does anything, there usually needs to be some pressure from local people to bring a problem to light. So, perhaps we need a campaign by local residents who want to see this change. Then the council might contract a town planner or an architect to come up with some possible designs for a new road system.
- I'm not sure how exactly the process of creating a pedestrian street would work, but I imagine that it would require detailed planning. Perhaps a bypass would need to be built around the town centre first. This would give drivers a faster alternative to driving through the town, and it would allow the main shopping street to be blocked off and pedestrianised.
- I'd like to see this change because it would really improve the quality of life of residents in the town where I live. I can imagine the new pedestrian street having cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating. It would be a safer and more pleasant place for families to go shopping, and I'm sure this would have a positive knock-on effect on local shops and businesses.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'film' answer

**Describe a film that you would like to see in the future.
You should say**

**what the film is called
what it is about
how you heard about this film
and why you would like to see it.**

Here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to talk about a film that I'd like to see when it comes out later this year. It's the new James Bond film, and I saw in the news that it's going to be called 'Spectre'. I think 'Spectre' refers to the name of the imaginary criminal organisation that James Bond has to defeat in the film.
- As 'Spectre' hasn't been released yet, I don't know exactly what it will be about. But I can guess that the hero, Bond, is going to be on a mission to save the world from an arch-criminal as usual. I'm sure it will be similar to most of the previous Bond films, with a plot line involving lots of twists and turns, and with Bond using his skills to defeat his nemesis in the end.
- I first heard about this film when I was watching the news a couple of months ago, and since then I've seen the official trailer on TV. There have also been various articles in newspapers discussing the actors who have been cast to play supporting roles in the film. The James Bond films are always big news here in the UK, probably because Bond himself is an English character.
- I'd like to see 'Spectre' at the cinema because I'm sure it will be full of action scenes and special effects, and I like the fact that Bond's missions always take place in spectacular locations in different parts of the world. Of course Bond films are totally unrealistic, you could even say ridiculous. But they're always fast, entertaining and fun, a bit like a roller-coaster ride!

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'prize' answer

Here's a question that I mentioned in a lesson a few weeks ago:

Describe a prize that you would like to win. You should explain

- *what the prize is for*
- *how you know about it*
- *what you would have to do to win it*
- *and why you would like to win this prize.*

And here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to talk about a prize that I would like to win, which is the 'employee of the year' award at the company where I work. At the end of December each year, the company directors give this award to a member of staff who has made an outstanding contribution to the business over the previous twelve months.

- I first heard about this prize during my training and orientation period just after I got the job three years ago. It was early December and some of my colleagues were discussing who might be awarded 'employee of the year' later that month. I was intrigued, and asked them to tell me more about the award.
- As I said, the prize is given for 'outstanding contribution to the business'. We don't have an exact definition of what this means, but we assume that you have to achieve certain standards, such as 100% attendance, good punctuality, meeting targets and deadlines, good teamwork, and so on. I think the winner also needs to have done something especially creative. For example, last year's winner created a completely new service for our clients.
- I'd like to win 'employee of the year' because it would mean that my work had been recognised by the company directors, and this would definitely help me to progress in my career. It would also give me a great sense of personal achievement.

IELTS Speaking: 'future aim' answer

Last month I forgot to write a sample answer for the question below.

Describe an aim or goal that you hope to achieve in the future.

You should say

- *what the aim is*
- *when you hope to achieve it*
- *what you need to do to reach your goal*
- *and why this goal is important to you.*

Here's my answer. Can you find any 'less common vocabulary' in it?

- I'm going to describe a future aim of mine, which is to write a book. I'd like to write a novel, so the story or plot would be **fictional**, but it would probably be influenced by some of my own experiences, ideas and views.
- Unfortunately I have no idea where to start or what my novel would be about, so I can't imagine achieving this aim until later in my life. Maybe it will be something that I do as a hobby when I retire, or I might suddenly be inspired to start writing much sooner. It's just a vague objective at the moment.
- I think it must be extremely difficult to find the motivation to write a novel, so more than anything I would need time, commitment and the passion to keep working until I finished. I would probably need to set a goal of writing for a certain amount of time each day, and of course I'd need a good idea for a story in the first place.
- This goal interests me because I've always wondered how people manage to create a work of fiction from nothing; I've always wondered whether I could do the same, and whether I'd be capable of bringing a story to life. I've always enjoyed reading, and I'd like to follow in the footsteps of my favourite authors.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'indoor game' answer

Describe an indoor game that you enjoyed as a child. You should say

- *what the game was*
- *where you played it*

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- *who played this game with you*
- *and why you liked it*

- As a child I enjoyed playing chess. I think chess is probably the best known board game in the world. It's a game for two players, and the aim is to defeat the other player by taking his or her pieces and eventually trapping his King. This final move is called checkmate.
- I remember that it was a classmate of mine at primary school who first taught me to play chess. He had a small, portable chess set, and once I knew how each piece moved, we started playing at break and lunch times; we played in our classroom or outside on the school playground. Later my parents bought me my own chess set as a birthday present so that I could play at home.
- I taught my younger brother to play, and at some point I joined the school chess club. There I had the chance to hone my skills against some of the older pupils, and in my final year of primary school I made it onto the school team. There were five of us on the team, and we competed against children from other primary schools in the same town.
- I liked playing chess because I enjoyed the challenge of thinking ahead and trying to outwit my opponent. I was probably seven or eight years old when I started playing, and it seemed like a very mysterious and intellectual game at that time. Also, although I loved winning, chess taught me to learn from my losses and to congratulate the person who had beaten me.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'school' topic

Describe a school that you went to when you were a child. You should say

- *where the school was*
- *when you went there*
- *what the school and the teachers were like*
- *and explain whether you enjoyed your time there.*

Here's my sample (band 9) answer:

- I'm going to talk about my primary school. The school was called and it was in the town of The location of the school was great because it was within walking distance of our family home at the time. The route to school was all downhill, which made it an easy walk in the morning, but a tiring journey on the way home in the afternoon!
- I was a pupil at school between the ages of 5 and 11 - the full 6 years of primary education. From age 11 onwards, I went to a nearby secondary school.
- My primary school seemed like a big place at the time, but it was actually quite a small school, with only six classes. I remember there being a large room called the assembly hall, where the whole school gathered every morning to hear messages from the headmaster. I also remember spending a lot of time on the playground and on the sports field. I liked all of my teachers; they were caring but strict at the same time, and I think they fostered a positive and fun atmosphere in the school.
- I have really fond memories of my primary school years, mainly because of the friends I made and the fun I had. One of my most vivid memories is of performing in the school play in my final year. I had to learn lines and play the part of a

character in a traditional children's story. It was a nerve-racking experience, but it felt like my first real achievement.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: family celebration

Describe a family celebration that you remember. You should say

- *what you were celebrating*
- *who was present*
- *what you and your family did to make the celebration special*
- *and why you enjoyed the occasion.*

Here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to describe my sister's wedding day, which took place a few years ago in the town where I grew up. For my sister it was the biggest and most important day of her life.
- I think there were around 100 people at the marriage ceremony, which was held in a church. Even more people came to the party, or the wedding reception as we call it, after the ceremony. Of course, most members of my family were there, as well as the groom's family and a collection of the bride and groom's friends and colleagues.
- To make the celebration special, we did what families normally do. My mother made sure that the church and the reception venue were nicely decorated - there were flowers everywhere! Obviously we all dressed for the occasion, and there were bridesmaids, gifts, a huge wedding cake, and so on.
- I enjoyed the occasion because it was great to see my sister so happy on her big day. The ceremony was perfect, and we all had a fantastic time at the reception. It's rare for me to see all of my family and friends together in one place, so that's probably what made the day so memorable for me.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'positive experience' answer

Describe a positive experience that you had as a teenager. You should say

- *what the positive experience was*
- *where you were*
- *who you were with*
- *and explain why you found the experience positive.*

Here's my sample answer, taking some of the ideas from [this lesson](#).

- I'm going to describe the first time I visited England's capital city, London, on a school trip when I was a teenager. I had never been to London before, and it was great to share that experience with my school friends.
- The positive experience wasn't confined to one particular place in London. As far as I remember, I enjoyed the whole trip, from the coach journey to the visits to various tourist attractions. We got off the coach near the Houses of Parliament, and so one of my first memories was seeing the famous 'Big Ben' clock tower. We also visited the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square.

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- As I said earlier, it was a school trip, and I think there were around thirty of us, including two teachers. I was with a group of close friends, which made the experience more enjoyable.
- What really struck me about London was that it was historic but modern and thriving at the same time. It seemed to me to be a lively, fashionable and cosmopolitan place. Coming from a relatively small town, the experience made me keen to visit more capital cities in the future.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: sample answer

Here's the question we've been looking at in recent weeks:

Describe a subject that you think should be removed from school education programmes. You should say

- *what the subject is*
- *why you think it is unnecessary for children to study it*
- *and explain what you would replace it with.*

Here's my sample answer with band 7-9 vocabulary underlined:

- I'm going to suggest that art could be taken out of the school curriculum. In my experience, art lessons at school tend to include drawing, painting, and the making of collages using paper, fabric and other household materials.
- There are a few reasons why I think that school art lessons are unnecessary. Firstly, I don't believe that drawing and painting are essential skills that children will need when they leave school. Children might find these activities enjoyable, but it's unlikely that they will need them in the working world. Secondly, children can draw, paint and make collages in their own time at home; parents can encourage this, and they can even join in. Finally, remembering my own art lessons at school, I don't think we learnt any real art skills; the teachers left us to draw or create things, but they didn't provide much technical instruction.
- Instead of art lessons, children could do more work on core subjects like maths, science or language. These subjects are more likely to help children in later life when they enter the job market, and I think both children and their teachers would benefit if more time were devoted to them.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a conversation

Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone you didn't know. You should say

- *who the person was*
- *where the conversation took place*
- *what you talked about*
- *and explain why you found the conversation interesting.*

Here's my sample (band 9) answer:

- I'm going to talk about an interesting conversation that I had a couple of weeks ago in a music shop. I was **walking along** one of the main shopping streets in the city centre, when a large window displaying all sorts of musical instruments caught my eye. Out of curiosity, I decided to go in and have a look around.

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- The person I ended up speaking to was a shop assistant on the second floor, in the area of the shop dedicated to acoustic guitars. I hadn't intended to speak to anyone, but the assistant approached me in a friendly way and asked whether I had any questions.
- I explained to the assistant that I hadn't played the guitar for years, but that I wondered what the differences were between the various acoustic guitars on show. He talked to me about the different makes and models, whether they were factory or hand made, the woods and varnishes used, the variation in sound quality, and of course the price range.
- I found the conversation fascinating because the shop assistant was so knowledgeable. It was obvious that he had a passion for the guitar, and he didn't mind talking to me even though I had made it clear that I didn't intend to buy anything. He even picked up and played three or four of the instruments to demonstrate the differences in their sound.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'future plans' answer

<https://www.ielts-simon.com/ielts-help-and-english-pr/2013/10/ielts-speaking-part-2-adapt-what-you-prepared.html>

Here's my answer to the [future plans](#) question:

- I'm going to talk about a future plan that I have, which is to buy a good camera and to become a better photographer. At the moment I'm just using the camera on my mobile phone, but I've realised that it has its limitations.
- I thought of this plan when I was at a friend's wedding a few weeks ago. I got some great pictures of the bride and groom and their guests celebrating, but I did notice that with my phone camera I wasn't able to capture longer range photos, or photos in darker conditions; the phone's zoom and flash aren't very good. Next time I'd like to be able to capture a special occasion in higher quality images.
- Obviously this plan depends on whether I can save enough money to buy the camera I'd like. Also, before making a decision about which camera to get, I'll probably talk to a friend who knows more about photography than I do.
- In terms of buying a camera, I'll achieve this plan if I can save some money! In terms of becoming a better photographer, I think I'll achieve that goal by experimenting with my new camera and by learning as I go along.

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IELTS Speaking Part 2: favourite season

Describe your favourite season in your country. You should say

- *when that season is*
- *what the weather is like at that time of year*
- *how that season is different from other seasons*
- *and why it is your favourite season.*

Here's my sample answer:

- My favourite season in England is winter. A typical English winter would last around 4 or 5 months between November and March, but when I say that I like the winter, I'm really thinking about the coldest month or two each year.
- During those really wintry months, the temperature drops below zero and it often snows. Over the last few years we've had periods of quite heavy snowfall, to the extent that roads have been blocked and schools have had to close. Last winter I remember looking out of the window one morning and seeing everything covered in a layer of white.
- Obviously the snow is what differentiates winter from the other seasons, but when it doesn't snow there isn't much difference between winter, autumn and spring; winter is just a bit colder.
- The reason I've chosen winter as my favourite season is because I like the snow. I live near the countryside, and the landscape looks beautiful when everything is covered in white. We also celebrate Christmas and New Year in the winter, and these are my favourite festivals.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a market

Describe an open-air or street market which you enjoyed visiting. You should say:

- *where the market is*
- *what the market sells*
- *how big the market is*
- *and explain why you enjoyed visiting it.*

Here's my description. It includes several examples of 'band 7-9' vocabulary that I took from the websites I listed in last week's lesson.

- I'm going to describe a street market that I've enjoyed visiting many times in Manchester. It's the Manchester Christmas Market, and it comes to the city for about a month from the end of November every year. The market stalls are spread across several sites in the city centre, but the centrepiece is the large European market in Albert Square next to the Town Hall.
- The Christmas Market stalls sell an array of Christmas gifts and mouth-watering food and drink from all over Europe. It's a great place to find handmade crafts such as jewellery, ornaments, wooden toys and other souvenirs, but it's the food and drink that seem to be most popular. Probably the biggest seller is the 'Gluhwein', a hot, sweet wine which is sold in a souvenir mug.
- The market was originally quite small, occupying just one of the central squares in Manchester, but it's grown quickly in recent years, spilling over into maybe five other pedestrian streets and a few other squares. Apparently there are over 200 stalls now, so it's become a really big event attracting thousands of visitors.
- The main reason I've always enjoyed visiting the Christmas Market is the fantastic atmosphere. When I went there last December, it didn't matter how cold or wet the weather was, Manchester seemed to come alive when the market opened; the streets were bustling with people and there was a real festive feel to the city.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: funny situation

Describe a funny situation that made you laugh. You should say

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- *when this situation took place*
- *what happened*
- *how you reacted and why you found the situation funny.*

Here's my example answer. It's a true story!

- I'm going to talk about a funny thing that happened to me a couple of weeks ago. I think it was a Saturday morning, and I was sitting having a coffee in a café near where I live.
- I was on my own so I decided to read the newspaper while drinking my coffee. I must have been quite engrossed in what I was reading because the time passed quickly, and I suddenly realised that I needed to get going. What I didn't realise was that I had been sitting with my legs crossed, and one of my legs had completely gone to sleep. As I stood up to leave the café, I quickly became aware that my left leg was 'dead', but it was too late; I started to fall. I thought I could catch myself on the table, but the table tipped over and I fell to the floor in front of everyone in the café!
- I can remember being on my knees in the middle of the café, looking up at the staff and customers around me. I felt really embarrassed and I expected the other people to find it funny, but to my surprise nobody was laughing. They were all worried that something really bad had happened to me! As I got up from the floor, I had to explain to the whole café that I was fine. I was embarrassed at the time, but I laughed about it later!

IELTS Speaking Part 2: team project

Describe a team project that you worked on. You should say:

- *what it was*
- *what you did*
- *and how you felt about it.*

Example answer (band 9):

I'd like to talk about a team project that I was involved in during my final term at business school. There were four of us on the team, and our task was to work with a local company to research a new market, in a European country, for one of their products or services. Our objective was to produce a report and give a presentation.

The first thing we did was split into two groups of two. We had been assigned a company that produced a range of bicycle accessories, so two of us spent some time getting to know the company while the other two researched the market and the competitors in the target country, which was Germany. In the end, I think it was a successful project because we managed to identify a possible gap in the market in Germany for one of the company's products. Our group presentation also went really well.

Until that point, the course had been all about business theory, so it was quite a learning experience to work with a real company. I felt a real sense of accomplishment when we handed in our report and delivered our presentation, and I think all of us were proud of what we had done.

IELTS Speaking: describe a piece of furniture

Here are some ideas for [last week's question](#):

- I'm going to talk about my favourite chair. It's a big, leather armchair that sits in my living room at home, just under my living room window.
- I didn't actually buy the armchair. One of my friends was moving house and was going to buy some new furniture. I had always liked his leather armchair, so he said I could have it if I managed to move it. The chair wouldn't fit in my car, and it was tricky to get it out of my friend's apartment. I had to hire a small van to take the armchair home.
- Obviously I use the armchair for sitting! It's my favourite place in the house to relax, read a book, watch TV or even do some work; the chair's arms are quite wide and flat, so my laptop fits nicely on either of them. Last night I fell asleep in my armchair while I was watching a film.
- The main reasons why I like this piece of furniture are that it's comfortable and it's in the perfect position in my living room. The only drawback might be that I enjoy sitting in the armchair too much, and sometimes I think it makes me lazy!

Remember to highlight any useful words or phrases that you found in my description. Also, did you notice some of the strategies that I used to make the answer more interesting?

IELTS Speaking Part 2: old building description

Describe an old building that you like. You should say:

- *where it is*
- *what it is used for*
- *and why you like it.*

The answer below is adapted from the [modern building](#) description I wrote last year. Can you spot some of the vocabulary that I've recycled?

1. I'm going to describe a very famous building in New York: the Empire State Building. People might not think of it as an old building, but the Empire State Building was built in 1931, so I don't think it can be classed as new. It's located on Manhattan island and it's probably the most distinctive and recognisable building when you look at New York's skyline.
2. As far as I know, the Empire State Building is an office building, but visitors can go up to an observation deck on the top floor, which is the 102nd floor. There's also a 360-degree observation area on the 86th floor. Apparently, the building makes more money from the sale of tickets to the observation floors than it does from office rentals.
3. I think the Empire State Building is still one of the most impressive skyscrapers in the world. It's such an iconic structure, and it's amazing to think that it was built around 80 years ago. The best thing about the building is the viewing deck on the top floor, which offers spectacular views of the city; it's definitely the best vantage point in New York. I'd recommend anyone who visits the city to go there and experience the view.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'difficult' questions

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Students tend to worry about 'difficult questions', but questions are often much easier than they seem. For example:

Describe a law in your country.

Many students think they don't know anything about laws. However, there are some easy examples that they could choose:

1. In many countries it is now illegal to use a mobile phone while driving. You could start by talking about the popularity and benefits of mobile phones, and explain that people want to be able to answer calls wherever they are. Then you could explain the dangers of being distracted while driving; this law could reduce the number of road accidents, and therefore save lives.
2. If you feel confident talking about the 'education' topic, you could choose the 'compulsory education' law. This is the legal requirement that children up to a certain age must attend school. In the UK, for example, children are required by law to continue in education until they are 16 years old. This is a good topic because you can talk about the benefits of education.

Of course, you could choose a more obvious law (it is illegal to steal, carry a gun etc.) but you might have more ideas and good vocabulary if you choose a typical IELTS topic like number 2 above.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: TV channel

Last week we looked at this question:

Describe a TV programme or channel that you enjoy watching regularly.

- *What it is called and what it is about?*
- *When do you usually watch it ?*
- *Why do you prefer it to other programmes or channels?*

Here's a sample description with the best vocabulary underlined:

- I rarely watch traditional television channels nowadays; I much prefer searching for interesting programmes or videos online. So, although it's not a normal TV channel or programme, I'd like to talk about a website which I think is kind of a modern version of a TV channel. It's called TED, which stands for 'Technology, Entertainment, Design', and it's a great place to watch short talks and presentations about all sorts of interesting topics.
- The good thing about the videos on TED is that I can watch them whenever I want. I have ted.com saved as one of my favourites on my laptop, and I tend to visit the website every few days to check whether there is anything new. I often watch TED videos on my phone while I'm travelling to work on the train.
- The reason I like watching online videos on TED is that I learn something new every time I watch one. The tagline for the TED website is 'ideas worth spreading', and this really sums up the appeal of the site for me. Instead of watching meaningless soap operas and talk shows on TV, I'd much rather spend 10 minutes watching someone talk about a breakthrough in technology, science or healthcare.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a vehicle

Describe a vehicle you would like to buy in the future. You should say

- *what kind of vehicle it is*
- *what you would use it for*
- *and why you would like to buy it.*

Here's my sample answer:

- If I had the money, I'd like to buy my own helicopter. I recently saw a TV programme about someone who flew around in his own helicopter, and I remember thinking that it would be great to have one. The helicopter on the programme was a small, blue, two-seater and it seemed quite easy to fly - that's the kind of thing I'd like to buy.
- Ideally, I'd use my helicopter instead of a car. First, I'd need to learn to fly it, but then I'd use it to go on short trips or holidays. It would be fantastic to be able to avoid traffic jams, and get everywhere in a fraction of the time it normally takes. I'd take friends and family sightseeing, over cities or mountain tops, and maybe I could even use it to do the shopping!
- The reason I'd like to buy a helicopter is that you can park one almost anywhere. You don't need to find a runway or an airport like you would for a plane. So I'd be able to park my helicopter in my garden - if I had a bigger garden. Also, I've always been intrigued by those helipads on the tops of tall buildings - I think it would be fun to land on top of a building. A helicopter probably isn't a realistic choice of vehicle, but you never know - I might win the lottery!

PS. You should also have a look at Martin's sample answers in the comments area below [this lesson](#).

IELTS Speaking Part 2: foreign culture

Here are some ideas for [last week's question](#).

1. Which culture and how I know about it

I'm going to talk about France and French culture. I know France quite well because it was the first foreign country that I visited as a child. I've been on several family holidays there, and I lived and worked in Paris for a while after finishing university.

2. Cultural differences

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about France is the bread! I love the fact that French people buy fresh baguettes every morning, usually from small local bakeries or 'patisseries'; it makes a change from the loaves of sliced bread that most of us buy from the supermarket here in the UK. One slightly negative difference I noticed in Paris is that Parisians don't seem to make friends with their work colleagues to the same extent as we do here.

3. What I like about it

I really like the café culture in France. You can always find somewhere interesting to sit and have a coffee and chat to friends or just watch the world go by. I actually put on a bit of weight when I lived in France because I got into a habit of having a croissant or a cake in every nice café that I found. Another thing I could mention is that the last time I went to

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France on holiday, I played a game called 'boules' every day. The game consists in throwing metal balls as close to a target ball as possible. It's the perfect game for a relaxing afternoon when the weather's hot.

Tip:

Notice that I included personal examples or experiences in my answers. It's easy to talk for 2 minutes if you can tell a story or two.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a website

In Part 2 of IELTS Speaking, you might be asked to describe a website that you use:

Describe a website that you often use. You should say:

- *what type of website it is*
- *how you found out about it*
- *what it allows you to do, and why you find it useful.*

Here are some ideas, with some of the band 7-9 vocabulary underlined:

1. Facebook is a social networking website. It's a free website that allows you to keep in contact with friends or find people you've lost touch with. It's one of the most popular websites in the world, with millions of users in different countries.
2. All of my friends use Facebook. One of my friends sent me an email inviting me to join. I signed up and I've been using it ever since.
3. Facebook allows you to keep up to date with what friends are doing. You have a profile page with information and status updates so that you can tell everyone what you're doing. You can post messages to other people's pages. You can upload photos and videos. I find Facebook most useful for organising my life, keeping in touch with friends and storing photos. I think social networking websites have become part of everyday life.

IELTS Speaking: another garden description

Last week I described a famous garden. Martin, an IELTS teacher who often contributes to the comments on this site, sent me a description of his own garden. You might find it more useful than my famous garden description!

Martin's description:

Today I'd like to describe my home garden, which I think is a beautiful one and which I like very much. The garden is part of my home's backyard, and my house is located in the suburbs, about a 1-hour drive from the city of San Francisco. There is a big tree right in the middle of my garden, which is surrounded by a hot tub, a small water fountain, several bushes, a section for vegetables, and different kinds of flowers.

This garden was actually one of the reasons why my wife and I chose to buy our house because it had been beautifully maintained by the previous owner's gardener and landscaper. It's been only 1 year since we bought the house and now we are taking care of the garden ourselves. Even though we are not experts in gardening, we still try our best to plant things that we like, such as roses and tulips, and we even grow our own tomatoes.

Whenever family and friends come to visit us, we invite them to have a relaxing time in our hot tub, and enjoy the view. So in other words, our garden has also become a kind of resort! It

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definitely requires lots of hard work to properly maintain the garden, but it gives us a great sense of accomplishment to “decorate” it the way we like.

All in all, the garden is one of the best features of my home and it is a place where I can relax after a long day of work or during the weekends.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a garden

Describe a beautiful garden that you like. You should say

- *where it is*
 - *what you can see there*
 - *what people do there*
- and explain why you like it.*

Here are some ideas:



1. The garden I'm going to describe is famous because it belonged to the French painter Claude Monet. It's in a place called Giverny, which is in northern France, about an hour away from Paris in the province of Normandy.
2. There are actually two gardens at the Monet house in Giverny: a flower garden, and a Japanese inspired water garden. Apparently, Monet designed the gardens himself; he even had the pond and the famous Japanese bridge made. After creating the gardens, Monet painted some of the most well-known paintings in the world, such as those of the waterlilies below the bridge on his pond.
3. Thousands of people visit the gardens at Giverny to see the magnificent scenes that inspired Monet's paintings. Visitors can walk around the gardens and take pictures, which is what I did when I went there.
4. I like Monet's gardens because they are such beautiful creations, and it's amazing to see the 'real thing' having seen the famous paintings so many times.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: something that made you angry

Describe a situation that made you angry. You should say

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- *when it happened*
- *what happened*
- *how you felt*

Here are some ideas. Notice that I answer by telling a story, and that my ideas are not 'academic' or 'formal' because it isn't an academic topic. Study my answer carefully - it's full of good words and phrases.

Band 9 answer:

A recent situation that made me angry was getting stuck in a traffic jam on the way to meet some friends. It was last Sunday lunchtime, and I didn't expect there to be much traffic; people don't work on Sundays, so the roads aren't usually very busy.

Everything was going well until suddenly I saw a queue of cars on the road in front of me. I had no choice but to join the queue and wait to get past whatever was causing the delay. It turned out that it was caused by some roadworks, and it took me an extra 30 minutes to get past them.

Getting stuck in traffic congestion doesn't usually make me angry, but this time it did, mainly because I wasn't expecting it and I knew that my friends were waiting to meet me for lunch. I felt frustrated and powerless because there was nothing I could do to change the situation, and I had no idea how long I would be sitting there waiting. When I finally saw the reason for the congestion, I was relieved that I was close to getting past the roadworks, but I still felt a bit stressed knowing that I was half an hour late.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: artist or entertainer

The following question is a variation on the "describe a person" topic.

Describe an artist or entertainer you admire

You should say

- *who they are and what they do*
- *how they became successful*
- *how you found out about them*
- *and why you admire them*

I've tried to write a general example description that might help you with some ideas. In your description you *must* give the name of the person.

- I'm going to talk about a musician that I admire, called... He's a singer who also plays the guitar and writes his own songs. I think he recorded his first album about 10 years ago, and he's released several other CDs since then.
- He became successful after many years of writing songs and performing live in small venues all over the country. Gradually he built a following of people who liked his music. I think the key to his success was one of his songs that was used on a TV advertisement. This meant that more people became aware of his music.
- I found out about... because one of my friends got tickets to see him in concert. I hadn't heard any of his music before, but I went along to the gig and really enjoyed it. After that I bought the first CD, and now I've got all of them.

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- The reason I admire... is that he has **worked hard** for his success: it takes years of practice to become a good singer and guitarist, and he spent several years playing to very small audiences before he became successful. I also like the fact that he writes his own music. I admire people who have worked hard to get where they are.

Note: I've underlined the best vocabulary. 'Gig' is an informal word for concert or performance, but it's fine to use it in this context.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a lesson

Speak for 2 minutes about the following topic.

Describe an interesting lesson that you attended.

You should say

- *where you attended this lesson*
- *what it was about*
- *and why you found it interesting*

Here are some ideas for a description of a science lesson:

1. I'm going to talk about an interesting science lesson that I attended at secondary school when I was 14 or 15 years old.
2. It was quite a long time ago, so I can't remember every detail, but the lesson was about respiration. We learnt about how the lungs work, how we breathe, and how oxygen passes into the blood. The science teacher also talked to us about the effects of smoking on the lungs.
3. I found this lesson interesting because my science teacher, Dr. Smith, always introduced new topics by showing us a video. We watched a short film about how respiration works, and I found this much easier to understand than a science textbook. The film showed diagrams of the lungs to explain the breathing process. Later in the lesson we saw real photos of healthy lungs and lungs that had been damaged as a result of smoking; they had turned black. I think the image of a smoker's lungs is the reason why I remember this lesson.

I could also give more information about the teacher, his personality and why I liked him. The key is to *tell a story* and add details until the time runs out.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a building

Describe a modern building. You should say:

- *where it is*
- *what it is used for*
- *and why you like/dislike it.*

Here's my example description of a building in Manchester:

1. **I'm going to describe a modern building** in Manchester. It's called the Beetham Tower, and it's the tallest building in the city, with about 50 floors.
2. Although it's called the Beetham Tower, most people know this building as the Hilton Hotel. In fact, the bottom half of the tower is the hotel and the top half is

apartments. The apartments are expensive because the location and views make



them very desirable.

3. I'm not sure if I like the design of the building, it's just a huge glass tower, but it definitely stands out. It has become a famous landmark in the city. You can see it as you approach Manchester, and it's an easy place to meet people because it's so distinctive and easy to find. The most interesting thing about the Beetham Tower is that there is a bar/restaurant on the 23rd floor which **has spectacular views** of the city; it's definitely the best vantage point in Manchester because there are no walls, only huge windows, so you can look out over the city in any direction. I'd recommend anyone who visits Manchester to go there and experience the view.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: something naughty you did

This has been a recent question in part 2 of IELTS speaking:

Describe something naughty you did when you were a child. Say

- *what you did*
- *when you did it*
- *why you did it*
- *and explain how your parents felt about it.*

This is a difficult topic for most people, so it's a good idea to prepare for it before your test. If you can remember a real situation, use that. If you can't remember being naughty, invent an easy story like my example below.

Example ideas:

1. I cheated in a test at primary school by looking at the answers in my book under the table.
2. I was about ... years old, it was a ... lesson. Give some more background about the lesson, the test, the teacher etc.
3. I hadn't studied for the test, I didn't want to fail and have to retake the test at lunchtime. Give reasons why you didn't have time to study.
4. The teacher caught me and told my parents. Explain their feelings: disappointed, angry, embarrassed. Explain the punishment e.g. they 'grounded' me for a week (informal expression, meaning 'they didn't allow me to go out or see friends').

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a skill

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Describe a practical skill that you have learnt (e.g. cooking, driving).

You should say

- what the skill is
- how you learnt it
- why you learnt it
- and how this skill has helped you.

Advice:

You need to make a quick decision, so I'd choose one of the given examples (cooking or driving). Then try to expand on each point.

1. I'm going to talk about driving, which is a practical skill that I use almost every day.
2. I learnt to drive a car by taking lessons when I was 17. My parents paid for me to have lessons with a professional driving instructor. I learnt by practising: first I had to get used to steering, changing gears and using the mirrors, then we practised things like reversing and parking. I also had to learn the highway code.
3. As a 17-year-old, I wanted to have the experience of driving a car, and I was fed up with having to walk or take the bus or train whenever I wanted to go somewhere. I also knew that driving would be an extremely useful skill.
4. Being able to drive has helped me in so many ways. The public transport where I live isn't very good, so I travel to work by car most days. Having a car makes my life much easier when it comes to things like shopping or visiting family and friends. (Last week, for example,...)

Note:

If you need to keep speaking, give examples for point 4.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an event

Describe a recent event that made you happy.

You should say:

- when and where it was
- who was involved
- what happened
- and explain why it made you happy.

The following description contains the kind of phrases that native speakers (like me) really use. I've underlined the best vocabulary.

1. When and where: my friend's birthday party, last Saturday evening, we went for a meal in an Italian restaurant.
2. Who: there were about 10 of us, he invited some close friends and work colleagues, most of them were people I've known since university.
3. What happened: we met at the restaurant, I gave my friend a present and a birthday card, we ordered some food, while we ate dinner everyone chatted, after the main course the waiter brought out a cake and we sang 'Happy Birthday', everyone went home quite late.

4. Why it made me happy: it was great to get together with old friends, I had some interesting conversations, it was a good opportunity to catch up with what my friends had been up to, it was a nice way to wind down after a hard week at work, the food was delicious, I went home feeling full after a fantastic meal.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a person

Describe a person you admire.

You should say:

- *who the person is*
- *what he or she is like*
- *and why you admire him or her.*

Here are some ideas. I've underlined the best vocabulary.

- I'm going to talk about my father because he has been a major influence in my life.
- My father was always a good role model for me as I was growing up. He's hard-working, patient and understanding; he's also got a good sense of humour and seems to get on well with everybody. Hopefully I've inherited some of these traits.
- I admire my father because I think he brought me and my brothers/sisters up well; he was quite strict but always fair, and he has always been someone I can turn to for advice. I think my father set a good example by working hard and having a positive outlook on life. I remember that he used to leave for work early and come home quite late, but he always made time for me and my brothers/sisters.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an advertisement

Describe an interesting advertisement that you have seen. You should say:

- *where you saw it*
- *what it was about*
- *why you think it was an interesting advertisement.*

Choose something simple. Here's an example with the "band 7" vocabulary underlined:



1. I'm going to talk about a advertisement for Coca-Cola, which is one of the biggest brands in the world. I've seen Coke advertised everywhere, on posters and TV commercials.

2. The advert shows a picture of Santa Claus smiling and holding a bottle of Coke. I think the aim is to target children and associate (link/connect) the brand with Christmas time.
3. The advert is interesting because the company is deliberately trying to influence and attract children. The marketers are trying to capture young customers. They are presenting the drink as something special, a gift for Christmas. However, Coca-Cola is not necessarily a healthy drink for children; it contains a lot of sugar. Maybe this kind of advertising manipulates children and encourages them to pester their parents.

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an object

In IELTS speaking part 2, you might be asked to describe an object. For example:

- Describe something you bought recently.
- Describe a gift you gave or received.
- Describe something you own which is important to you.

Choose something easy, like a mobile phone:

I'm going to describe my mobile phone. I bought it online / in a mobile phone shop / it was a present from...

I use the phone to keep in touch with friends and family, for communication by voice, text and email. It has various features like video, MP3 player, wireless Internet, digital camera and games. It's easy to share photos and music. I use it for almost everything, it even has a calendar that reminds me about appointments.

My phone is an essential part of my life. It holds my contacts, my photos, my music collection. I've got instant access to my favourite websites. It's like having my whole life in my pocket. I couldn't live without it.

Note:

I've underlined the best phrases for IELTS band 7 or higher.

IELTS Speaking: describe a toy

Below, you can read an example description of a toy (for IELTS speaking part 2). See yesterday's lesson for the full question.

Lego Car Description:

One special toy that I remember getting was a Lego car. It was a birthday present from my parents. I can't remember exactly how old I was, but I was probably about 10 or 11.

The special thing about this car was that I had to build it myself out of hundreds of pieces of Lego. The pieces came in a box with a picture of the finished car on the front, and I had to follow step-by-step instructions to put all the pieces together in the correct way.



This wasn't an easy task because the car even had an engine, movable seats and gears. It took me a day or two to make, and required a lot of concentration.

When the car was finished it looked great, and I felt a sense of accomplishment. I seem to remember that I didn't play with the car very much; the fun part had been the process of building it.

Don't just read this description once. Spend some time analysing it:

- Is the description well-organised and easy to follow?
- Can you find any good 'band 7' words or phrases?
- Could you write a similar description for a different toy?

IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an animal

Several students have asked me about this question:

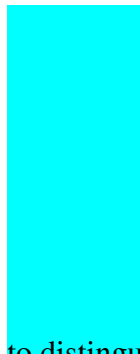
Describe a wild animal from your country.

You should say

- *what the animal is and what it looks like*
- *where it lives*
- *and explain how people in your country (or you) feel about this animal.*

You might not be able to copy my example because I've described an animal that is common in the UK. However, hopefully my description will give you some ideas.

1. I'm going to describe the 'robin' which is a wild bird that is common in the UK. The robin is a small bird with brown and white feathers and an area of bright red colour on its face and on the front of its body. The area of red colour makes robins



very easy to distinguish from other birds.

2. Robins are common garden birds. Many houses in the UK have a garden, and you can often see this bird sitting in a tree. They make their nests in trees and go looking for food. You might also see a robin if you go for a walk in the countryside or in a park.
3. Robins have a special place in British culture. They are considered to be Christmas birds, and are often used on Christmas cards. Many people leave food in their gardens for robins and other small birds to eat.

Part 3

What do you think are the characteristics of a good speaker?

I think good speakers are confident and passionate about the subject of their speech. They need to be interesting and engaging. I think a speaker's body language is also really important. A famous example of a great speaker is Barack Obama; he seems to be a

naturally **inspiring speaker**, but I'm sure that practice and **preparation** are more important than natural talent.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'technology' topic

1. What technology or equipment is used in most workplaces nowadays?
2. Does technology help workers or make their lives more difficult?
3. What effect does new technology have on employment?

1. Tip: give a list of different technologies, then talk about one in detail:

In most workplaces people use equipment such as computers, phones, printers, fax machines and photocopiers. I think the computer is probably the most **essential** piece of equipment because **we rely on it for almost everything: communicating by email, writing reports, organising data, and finding information on the Internet.**

2. Tip: talk about the positives AND the negatives:

Technology definitely helps workers because it makes many tasks so much easier. For example, email is **such a useful tool for communication between employees in different offices, or even in different countries.** On the other hand, technology can make life more difficult, especially when it goes wrong. It causes a lot of stress when the Internet is down or a computer crashes.

3. Tip: give the good effects AND the bad effects:

I think technology is often responsible for people losing their jobs. Machines have replaced people in areas like manufacturing and agriculture, and whenever a new technology is introduced, there are redundancies. At the same time, jobs might be created thanks to a new technology; for example, there would be no computer programmers if the computer hadn't been invented.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'difficult jobs' answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions in last Friday's lesson. Can you find any useful vocabulary in my responses?

What are the most difficult jobs that people do?

I think jobs can be hard for various different reasons. Some professions, such as concert pianist or surgeon, are difficult in the sense that they require **a high level of skill** that must be developed through many years of study and practice. On the other hand, jobs like police officer, **firefighter or soldier** might not require such high skill levels, but they are known to be extremely **stressful and sometimes traumatic.**

Why do you think some people choose to do difficult jobs?

I suppose we all want to do something meaningful. For some people, this means achieving a great **ambition** that takes years of hard work. People who choose dangerous jobs might do so for altruistic reasons or because they feel it's their duty to **contribute to society.**

Do you agree or disagree that all jobs are difficult sometimes?

I would have to disagree with that. I think we all feel that our jobs are difficult or stressful at times, but in the grand scheme of things we have nothing to complain about. A tight deadline or a lost computer file are really just minor inconveniences when compared with the horrors of war that soldiers face, or **the life-and-death situations** that paramedics see every day.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: future 'opinion' answers

Here are two sample answers that include opinions about the future:

Will large shopping malls continue to be popular, despite the growth of internet shopping?

I can't see **shopping malls** disappearing any time soon, so yes, I think they will definitely continue to **attract shoppers**. We already have internet shopping, with websites like Amazon now mainstream, but the **large** shopping centres in my city are still packed with people. The Trafford Centre near Manchester, for example, is hugely popular, and I think this is because it offers more than just shopping. It's a place **where families go for a day out**, to have lunch or to **visit attractions** like Sea Life or Legoland, and naturally they will browse the shops and buy things there too.

Do you think that some businesses (e.g. banks and travel agents) will only operate online in future?

I'm sure they will, and I think this is already happening. **I'm pretty sure** that there are online-only savings accounts, and there are **travel websites** like Airbnb that **have** no physical presence on the high street. I imagine that more and more services will only be available online; this seems to be the way that things are going.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

When answering the two questions below, you should be aware that the examiner is expecting to hear some different verb tenses.

1. Do you think films **have changed** since **you were** a child?

No, I don't think films **have changed** much since I **was** a child. When I **was** younger I **enjoyed** watching **action films**, and the Hollywood formula for this type of film **seems** to be the same today. For example, I **liked** the original 'Superman' films, and superheroes **are** still a popular subject for **film-makers**.

2. As **the technology for home viewing** improves, do you think people **will** stop going to the cinema in future?

No, I don't **think** that people **will** stop going to the cinema. People **can** already buy fantastic home viewing equipment, but it still **feels** more special **to share the experience** of watching a new film with a **theatre full of people**. I don't **think** that technology **will** be able to replicate that cinema atmosphere.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'nice home' answers

Here are some sample answers for the 'nice home' questions that I asked you to look at two weeks ago. The questions come from Cambridge IELTS 14.

Note: I try to answer in a natural and slightly informal way, but with some good 'topic vocabulary'.

Why do some people buy lots of things for their home?

I think there could be a couple of different reasons for this. Some people like to surround themselves with beautiful objects and furnishings to brighten up their lives, while others buy lots of devices that are supposed to save time. In my own home we have examples of both types of object: we have things like ornaments and pictures because they look nice, and we have useful gadgets, like a small vacuum cleaner that we recently bought.

Do you think it is very expensive to make a home look nice?

No, definitely not. Basic furniture isn't expensive these days, especially now that we have shops like Ikea. I know plenty of people who have furnished and decorated their homes really nicely without spending too much money. Personally I also like the minimalist look: some basic furniture, light colours and not too much clutter.

Why don't some people care about how their home looks?

Maybe they just see their homes as a base - somewhere to eat and sleep - rather than a reflection of their tastes or personalities. And many people are just too busy with work and life outside the home to worry about furniture and decorations. A friend of mine, for example, doesn't seem to care about the way his house looks, but this is because he's almost never there; he travels for work and spends more time in hotel rooms than in his own house.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'lessons' topic

The following answers are at 'band 9' level. Which words and phrases help my answers to get such a high score?

1. What do you think makes a good lesson?

I think a good lesson is one that is interesting and engaging. By 'engaging' I mean that the students should feel involved in the lesson; they should feel that they are learning something new that is relevant to them. In my opinion, a lot depends on how the teacher delivers the content of the lesson in a way that students like. My favourite teacher at university used to involve the students by making us teach some of the lessons ourselves.

2. Do you think it's better to have a teacher or to teach yourself?

Well, there's no substitute for a good teacher. I think you can teach yourself, but you can learn a lot more quickly with the guidance of a teacher. For example, when learning a language, you really need someone to correct your mistakes; you can get the grammar and vocabulary from books, but books can't tell you where you're going wrong.

3. Do you think the traditional classroom will disappear in the future?

I don't think it will disappear, but it might become less common. I think more people will study independently, using different technologies rather than sitting in a classroom. Maybe students will attend a lesson just once a week, and spend the rest of their time following online courses or watching video lessons.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'technology and society' answers

Here are my 3-step (answer, explain, example) answers to the questions that I showed you last Friday:

1. How much has technology improved how we communicate with each other?

I'd say that technology has made **communication faster and easier**, but I don't think it has improved the quality of communication between people. I mean, it's so easy to send a text message or write a comment on social media **these days**, but maybe you could say that our conversations are quite **superficial** compared to the way people communicated in the past. For example, I remember writing **long, detailed letters** to friends and family members when I **was younger**, but **I tend to** just send **quick messages** from my phone nowadays.

2. Do you agree that there are still many more major technological innovations to be made?

Of course! People are working **on all sorts of new technologies** as we speak, and I'm sure that there will be **technological advances** and breakthroughs for as long as **human societies exist**. Personally, I'm fascinated to see what happens with **self-driving cars** and other types of **artificial intelligence** over the next few decades.

3. Could you suggest some reasons why some people are deciding to reduce their use of technology?

Yes, I think the main reasons are that **people feel overwhelmed** or that their use of technology is becoming **unhealthy**. Some people have realised that all the devices and applications that they use are **making their lives more complicated and stressful than necessary**. Others might see themselves **becoming addicted** to checking their phones, or wasting too much time on their **social media pages**. I try to limit my own use of my phone and laptop because I want to spend more of my time in the **'real world'** than on the Internet.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: example answers

Last Friday I asked you to try answering these two questions:

1. Do you think that it's important for people to celebrate their achievements?
2. Why do you think some people prefer not to tell others about their achievements?

1) I'll answer using an "idea, explain, example" structure:

Yes, I definitely think people should celebrate whenever they are successful in some area of life. I think the celebration is important because it **marks** the end of a period of **effort**, and so **it's a chance to enjoy the moment**, to take stock of what you have achieved, and to **share the achievement with others**. This is why, for example, universities have graduation ceremonies, which encourage students to celebrate together and **to take pride in what they have done**.

2) I'll answer using a "firstly, secondly, finally" structure:

I imagine that people have different reasons for keeping their achievements to themselves. One reason could be that some people don't like to **show off or draw attention to themselves**. Other people perhaps **don't value their own accomplishments** because they are constantly **aiming at even bigger goals**. Finally, I suppose that **many of us** are so busy that we don't stop to savour the moment; maybe we **need to slow down** and **enjoy our successes**.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: four-step answer

Let's try using all four of the steps that I recommended in last Friday's [lesson](#). Here's another question from IELTS speaking part 3, with my answer below it.

Do you think it's ever worth hiring a professional photographer?

(Direct answer) Yes, for certain special occasions I definitely think it's best to pay a professional to take photos. (Explain) A professional photographer is likely to have a better camera and related equipment, and you would hope that the end result will be a set of stunning photographs. (Personal example) Thinking back to a wedding that I attended last summer, I remember that the photographer knew exactly what he was doing, and he took some great pictures of the bride, groom and guests. (Opposite or alternative) Without a paid professional, you would have to rely on a friend or family member to take photos, and I think this would be risky. I don't think you can trust an amateur when it's a once-in-a-lifetime event.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: follow the steps (in your head)

When answering questions in part 3 of the speaking test, you should have three (or maybe four) steps that you follow.

Practise checking off these steps in your head as you answer:

1. Give a direct answer to the question
2. Explain with a reason or reasons
3. Give an example (e.g. a personal example)
4. Explain the opposite or an alternative (you don't always need this step)

For example, here's a question from a recent lesson:

Why do you think people like taking photos of themselves and others?

Here's my answer, following the first three steps above:

(Direct answer) I think the main reason why people take photos of themselves and their friends and family is to collect memories. (Explain) What I mean is that photos are like souvenirs that remind us of special moments in the past; people like looking back over their lives and seeing what they were doing or how young they looked at a particular time. (Example) My niece is a good example; she takes 'selfies' whenever she goes somewhere interesting, and she loves to look through them with her friends.

Task:

My answer is already long enough, but can you add the fourth step?

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'money' answers

Here are my (band 9) sample answers to the 'money' questions that I shared a few weeks ago.

1. Why is it important for people to save some of their money?

In the long term I think it's important to save for retirement, but it's also a good idea to have a certain amount of money saved so that you can deal with unexpected problems in the less distant future. For example, I've learnt to put some money aside for car repairs, and this came in useful recently when I needed to have my car's brake pads changed. If I hadn't had savings, the cost of getting my car repaired could have sent me into the red.

2. In your view, should children be taught how to manage money?

Not at school, no. I believe it's the job of parents to gradually teach children that kind of thing, or perhaps there's no need for anyone to teach children about money because they learn

about it naturally as they grow up. For example, I remember being given money to buy sweets or an ice cream when I was a child, and I soon learnt what I could afford and what I couldn't.

3. Do you think that girls are better at saving money than boys?

I've never thought about that before. I don't see any reason why girls would be better savers than boys or vice versa. I suppose it depends more on the personality of each individual and what their interests are. For example, a child who likes cheap toys might not think about saving, whereas a child who wants to buy something expensive, like a bike or a games console, might summon the willpower to save up!

IELTS Speaking Part 3: common question types

Here are 3 common question types that the examiner could ask you:

1. Compare and contrast
2. Give an opinion
3. Imagine

For example, if the topic is 'cities', the examiner might ask:

1. How is life different in cities compared to rural areas? (*compare*)
2. How do you think life in big cities could be made easier? (*opinion*)
3. What do you think cities will be like in 50 years time? (*imagine*)

In my answers below I've underlined a few 'markers' that show comparisons, opinions and future predictions.

1. Firstly, the cost of living in cities is much higher. Housing is much more expensive in cities compared to rural areas; everything costs more. I think life in cities is more difficult. There are more people, so there's more competition for jobs. Life is a lot slower in rural areas, everyone knows each other and there's a sense of community. I don't think rural areas experience the social problems that you find in cities, like crime and homelessness.
2. In my opinion cities need to be well-planned. Good public transport can definitely make life easier because there are so many people and it can be really stressful just to move around. Public areas like parks are also important because people need space to relax, and I think cities should be made into healthier places to live and work.
3. I imagine cities will be less polluted because we'll have electric cars and better public transport. More people might work from home so maybe cities won't be so busy. But I think there will probably still be problems because more and more people are migrating to cities. So I'm not so optimistic about issues like crime, homelessness and unemployment.

IELTS Speaking: 'status symbols' answers

Here are the questions from last Friday, with my sample answers below. Notice that all of my answers contain three sentences.

@vuttq

- 1) In your country, what possessions are considered "status symbols"?
- 2) Do you think we place too much importance on possessions?
- 3) Do you think things were different 50 years ago?

1) Answer, examples, explain:

The typical status symbols in my country are things like big houses, expensive luxury cars or sports cars, and anything made by certain brands. For example, a new Ferrari or a Rolls Royce or a Rolex watch would definitely be considered status symbols. I suppose the reason why these possessions are seen in this way is because you have to be very wealthy to buy them, so they show other people that their owner is rich and successful.

2) Answer, explain, example:

Probably, yes. Many people are obsessed with showing off their new mobile phone or wearing the latest fashions. I think it's a problem for teenagers because there's a lot of peer pressure to follow fashion or buy the latest gadget that their friends have got.

3) Answer, example, further explanation:

Yes, maybe people were less materialistic, and I think they bought things that lasted longer. For example, my grandparents always talked about how they repaired things rather than throwing them away. Maybe brands and advertising weren't as powerful as they are now.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'countryside' answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions that I shared last week.

1. What advantages does living in the countryside have, compared to living in a city?

I think there are some clear advantages to living in the countryside. First, with the clean air and lack of traffic or industry, countryside areas are much healthier places than the average city. Another benefit would be the sense of community that comes with living in a small village where everyone knows each other. Finally, it seems to me that the pace of life in the countryside is slower, and the people are more laid back and friendly, compared to the hustle and bustle and the stress of city life.

2. Have areas of countryside in your country changed since you were a child?

No, they haven't changed very much where I live. The reason for this is that countryside areas close to Manchester tend to be protected, and so construction is not allowed. For example, I live quite close to an area called the Peak District, and nothing seems to have changed there since I was young; the hills, paths and woodland areas are just as they were.

3. Do you think that visits to the countryside should be something that schools offer to their children?

Yes, I think it's a great idea for schools to take children on trips to the countryside, especially if those children live in a large town or city. A visit to the countryside can be both relaxing and educational; children can go for walks in the fresh air, and at the same time see animals and plants that they may never have seen before. If schools don't offer this opportunity, some children will never see life outside the city.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: analyse my answer

If you've read my advice about how to answer part 3 questions, you'll be able to analyse the answer below. Can you comment on the way I've organised or "built" the answer, and point out any good vocabulary and/or grammar? You should find several verb tenses, for example.

Do you think people will watch less television in the future?

Yes, I do think people will watch less television in the future, although that doesn't mean that they will watch fewer programmes or spend less time looking at screens. What I think will happen, and it's already happening, is that people will watch things on the Internet, through websites like YouTube. To use a personal example, I used to watch TV in the evenings, but now I often choose to stream videos, films and TV series through my computer instead.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: answer, explain, example

My sample answers below all follow a 3-step structure: answer, explain, example. I sometimes add a 4th step that you can see [here](#), but the first 3 steps are the most important. Practise answering all part 3 questions in this way.

1) How important is customer service for you?

(Answer) Customer service is really important for me because I like to feel welcome and valued as a customer. (Explain) If companies want us to use their products or services, I believe they should treat us well and therefore encourage us to return. (Example) For example, I have a favourite cafe where I like to go, and the friendly staff are the main reason that I've become a loyal customer.

2) What can companies do to improve their customer service?

(Answer) I think managers need to train their employees to deliver great customer service. (Explain) There are lots of things that staff members can do, such as ensuring that customers are greeted in the right way, their problems are handled quickly, and they are asked for feedback. (Example) For example, the staff in my favourite cafe greet customers as soon as they come through the door, and they always check that we are happy before we leave.

3) Why do you think employees sometimes don't provide good customer service?

(Answer) When employees' treatment of customers isn't good, I think it's usually because they are unhappy doing their jobs. (Explain) This might be because they are treated badly by their managers, or because they haven't been encouraged to take pride in their work. (Example) I remember in my first ever job, for example, I didn't like the work that I was given, and so I probably wasn't as thoughtful or attentive as I should have been when I had to speak to customers.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: longer answers

Do you remember my advice about how to give longer answers in part 3?

- Answer the question directly
- Explain your answer (ask your self why)
- Give an example
- Mention an alternative or opposite answer

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Example question

Do you think the seasons still influence people's behaviour?

Example answer

(direct answer) Yes, I do think the seasons still affect how we behave. (explain how) We still wear different clothes depending on the weather, and clothes shops change what they sell according to the season. We also adapt our habits and daily routines according to the time of year. (example) For example, people in my country like to eat outside in their gardens in the summer, but we can't do that during the other seasons. (opposite) On the other hand, I don't think we notice the change in seasons when it comes to food; the big supermarkets import food from around the world, so most people don't buy seasonal fruit and vegetables any more.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'reading' topic

Here are some questions from Cambridge IELTS 11. Each of my answers contains three sentences and follows the method suggested in [this lesson](#).

Are there any occasions when reading at speed is a useful skill?

Personally, if I'm reading something interesting, I don't like reading too quickly because I feel that I don't properly absorb the information. However, it can be useful to skim through things when you don't really want to read them, or when you just need to find one particular piece of information. For example, I read at speed when I'm checking a household bill or a letter from the bank.

Are there any jobs where people need to read a lot? What are they?

Well, researchers obviously need to read a lot, and I suppose that politicians, journalists and other professionals who need to know about current affairs read a lot too. Having said that, I think most workers read hundreds of emails every week. In my previous job, for example, I had to check internal staff emails at least twice a day.

Do you think that reading novels is more interesting than reading factual books? Why is that?

Both types of book can be equally interesting in my opinion. A good novel can transport you to another world where the characters in the book become almost real. On the other hand, factual books can give you fascinating insights into anything from psychology to ancient history.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'home' answers and structure

Here are my answers to questions 2 and 3 from last week's lesson:

1) How easy is it to find a place to live in your country?

Well, it depends on how much money you are able to spend and where exactly you want to live. Of course, if you have the money, it's very easy to find a place to live. However, house prices have been on the rise in recent years, and it is becoming difficult for young adults to buy their first homes, or even to pay rental prices in some areas, particularly in central London.

2) Do you think it's better to rent or to buy a place to live in?

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I think it's better to buy your own home if you can afford to do that. Buying your own home is a better investment in the long term, because you can sell the home and perhaps even make a profit on it. The alternative is to pay rent to a landlord who can ask you to leave at any moment.

3) Do you agree that there is a right age for young adults to stop living with their parents?

I'm not sure what the 'right' age would be, but I do agree with the principle that young adults should try to live alone if they can. For some people, the right age is when they get their first full-time jobs and can afford to pay rent, and for others it's when they start university and move into a hall of residence with other students. This was what happened in my case; I moved out of the family home at age 18 when I started university.

Let's look at how I structured the above answers.

Answer 2

Three sentences: 1) answer 2) explain 3) alternative

Answer 3

Three sentences: 1) answer 2) explain 3) personal example

As usual, I try to use the technique shown in [this lesson](#) to build longer answers.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: sample answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions in last week's lesson. I've used the ['long answer' steps](#) that I always recommend for part 3.

1) Do you think there are too many game shows on TV nowadays? Why?

(answer) Yes, there are far too many game shows on TV for my liking. (explain) I suppose the channels show these programmes because they are popular, and they must be very profitable. (example) A good example is 'Who wants to be a millionaire?', which has been sold to TV channels across the world. (alternative) Personally, I'm not a fan of game shows, and I'd much rather watch a film or an original drama series.

2) Do you think that people pay attention to adverts on TV? Why?

(answer) Yes, I think we are all influenced to some extent by TV adverts, otherwise companies wouldn't pay so much to have them shown. (explain) Advertisers are very good at making us believe that their products or services will improve our lives in some way. (example) For example, if you see an advert for a new phone, it plants a seed in your mind, and you start to wonder about upgrading your old phone.

IELTS Speaking: main tip for 3 parts

IELTS Speaking Part 3: idea, explain, personal example

Let's look at a sample answer using the "idea, explain, example" structure. This time I'm using a *personal* example in the last sentence.

What disagreements do teenagers often have with their parents? Why?

(Idea / basic answer) Teenagers disagree with their parents about all sorts of things, like the clothes they want to wear, whether they can go out with their friends, doing homework, and how much help they give their parents around the house. (Explain why) I think the teenage

years are when we develop a sense of identity, and we want to make our own decisions rather than follow other people's instructions. (Personal example) I remember having disagreements with my own parents, usually about simple things like getting up early in the morning, tidying my room, or doing the washing up!

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'TV programme' answers

Here are my sample answers to the questions that I shared with you last week. Notice that I use the 3 or 4 steps that I recommended, and remember to note down any good words or phrases that you find.

1. Do you think most people watch TV for education or for entertainment?

I think people watch TV primarily for entertainment. There are far more entertainment programmes than educational ones, and in my experience most people treat television as a form of relaxation in the evening. If I think about the most popular TV programmes in the UK, such as talent shows like 'X Factor' or soap operas like 'Eastenders', the focus is definitely on entertainment rather than education.

2. Should TV play a role in educating children? How?

Yes, it definitely should play a role in my opinion. Good children's TV programmes should tell stories that contain some kind of lesson about how to behave or what is morally right and wrong. Many of the traditional fairy tales, such as 'Cinderella', have been made into TV programmes, and there is always a positive message in those stories.

3. How do you think TV viewing habits change as people get older?

TV viewing habits obviously change a lot as we get older. While toddlers might watch programmes about talking animals, teenagers prefer action and adventure or sports, and as adults we start taking an interest in news and politics. My own preferences, for example, have changed over the years - I would never have watched news programmes when I was younger. I think it would be very strange if our viewing habits didn't mature!

Do you think that it's better to have clear aims for the future, or is it best to take each day as it comes?

(Answer) I think it's best to have a good idea of what you want to do with your life, especially in terms of studies and career. (Why) Having aims allows you to plan what you need to do today and tomorrow in order to achieve longer-term objectives. (Example) For example, if you want to become a doctor, you need to choose the right subjects at school, get the right exam results, and work hard at university. (Opposite) Without a clear aim, it would be impossible to take the necessary steps towards a career in medicine, or any other profession.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'community' answers

Here are my sample answers for the part 3 'community' topic:

1) What are some of the ways people can help others in the community? Which is the most important?

I think there are many ways to help others in our local communities. For example, where I live, some people volunteer to run activity clubs for children, or they help out in residential homes for elderly people. Others give money, food or clothes to organisations that support

people living below the poverty line. In my opinion, there isn't a scale of importance when it comes to helping others; all forms of help are positive.

2) Why do you think some people like to help other people?

Most people get a good feeling when they help others, and they understand that we can all experience difficult times in our lives when we might need support. For example, we all grow old, and we all run the risk of losing our jobs or having a health problem that affects our ability to look after ourselves. So, I think people help others because they empathise with them.

3) Some people say that people help others in the community more now than they did in the past. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

I disagree with that kind of opinion. It's impossible to generalise about how much people help in their communities from one generation to the next, so I don't think we should try to judge or compare how altruistic people are now or were in the past. There have always been those who help others and those who don't.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'advice' answers

Here are my sample answers for the 'advice' questions from [this](#) lesson:

1. Is it better to get advice from a friend or from a family member?

I think it depends on the kind of advice that you need. Parents and grandparents probably have more life experience than a friend, and so you might get a wiser or more sensible answer from them. On the other hand, friends are less likely to become too worried if you go to them with a problem. For example, I probably wouldn't want to burden my parents with a financial problem.

2. What would you say are the characteristics of a good adviser?

Well, firstly, a good adviser should be a good listener, someone who takes the time to understand the situation before offering advice. Secondly, an adviser should try to be objective, and avoid judging the person who is seeking help. Finally, I think the best advisers have the ability to ask the right questions and encourage others to find their own answers.

3. Should people make their own work and career decisions, or is it a good idea to ask for advice about this?

I'd say that it's a mixture of both things. Most of us talk to family, friends, teachers or colleagues before we make career choices. However, I believe that the final decision should rest with the individual; we all need to take ultimate responsibility for the big life choices that we make.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'paragraph' answers

Here are my answers to the questions in last week's lesson.

1) Do you think that it's important for people to go on holiday?

Answer using 'idea, explain, example'

Yes, I think we all need to go on holiday at least once or twice a year. It isn't healthy to work all year round without some time off to relax; we all need to take a break and recharge our batteries from time to time. Last summer, for example, I went on holiday to France for a

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couple of weeks, and it was great to leave all of my usual responsibilities behind me. I came home feeling really refreshed and reinvigorated.

2) *Why do you think some people prefer not to go abroad on holiday?*

Answer using 'firstly, secondly, finally'

I suppose there are different reasons why some people choose not to go abroad on holidays. Firstly, it's usually more expensive to travel abroad than it is to stay at home. A second reason could be that some people find it stressful to spend time in a foreign country where they don't speak the language, or where they feel that they can't easily integrate with the locals. Finally, many people just love where they live, and don't feel the need to travel abroad.

IELTS Speaking: 'hospitality' topic

1. In your country, how do people treat visitors from abroad?

I think we treat visitors well. People in the UK are very open-minded and welcoming, and we enjoy the mix of cultures that immigration and tourism bring. Most UK cities, for example, are really cosmopolitan, and you can meet visitors from every part of the world.

2. Do you think hospitality towards visitors is less important than it was in the past?

In my city, maybe it's true that hospitality is less important nowadays, but that's only because we are so used to seeing visitors from different countries, so we treat it as a normal part of life and nothing too special.

3. What are the advantages of staying with a friend compared to staying in a hotel when visiting a foreign country?

If you stay with a friend, you benefit from someone with local knowledge of the best places to visit. You can also get to know the character and customs of the local people, and for me, this is one of the most interesting aspects of a visit to another country. On the other hand, if you stay in a hotel, you are forced to discover the new place on your own, so it's more of an adventure.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: add more detail

In [this lesson](#) I mentioned 3 techniques to help you give longer answers: ask yourself why, explain the alternatives, give an example.

Most students have no problem with the first step (explaining why), but they aren't so good at giving alternatives or examples. Take the following question from last week's lesson for example.

Question:

In your opinion, are newspapers important?

Example student answer:

Yes, in my opinion newspapers are very important (*why?*) because they give us information about what is happening around the world. (*why?*) They are a vital source of knowledge about education, technology, medicine and many other fields.

This is a good start, but let's try to raise the answer to band 9 level.

Example answer with 'alternative' and 'example':

Yes, in my opinion newspapers are very important (*why?*) because they give us information

about **what is happening around the world.** (*why?*) They are a vital source of knowledge about education, technology, medicine and many other fields. (*alternative?*) **If newspapers didn't exist,** I think the quality of news coverage would suffer because there would be fewer professional journalists. (*example?*) We would have to rely, for example, on unpaid bloggers who do not have the budgets to carry out detailed research before they write an article.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3, the examiner often asks a question about the past and a question about the future. For example:

1. Did people have more free time when your grandparents were young?
2. Do you think the hobbies people have will be different in the future?

In the first answer, the examiner wants to hear some past tense verbs. In the second answer, you will need to use a future tense:

1. When **my grandparents were young,** I think they **had less leisure time.** They **didn't** have the gadgets we use nowadays, so they probably **spent** more time doing simple things. For example, nowadays we **can cook** meals in a microwave in less than 5 minutes, whereas in the past people **had to cook** everything themselves.
2. **No,** I don't think hobbies **will change** much in the future. I'm sure people **will still play** games and sports. On the other hand, maybe the Internet is changing the way we spend our free time. In the future, more and more people **might have online hobbies.**

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3 of the speaking test, it's common to get questions about the past and future, as well as questions about 'now'. The examiner will be listening to your use of verb tenses:

What types of transport are there in your town?

In Manchester I think you **can find** every form of transport apart from an underground system. You **can drive** around the city by car **or get on a bus;** there **are** even free buses that take people between the train stations. Manchester also **has** a tram system, and of course there **are taxis too.**

How has transport changed since your grandparents were young?

Well, they **had** cars, trains and planes **back then,** and London already **had** the underground system, but I suppose the difference is that technology **has moved** on. Having said that, the transport system **is** not necessarily better nowadays; people **travel** a lot more, and I'm sure we **spend more time stuck in traffic.**

What types of transport do you think we will use in the future?

I'm not sure, but hopefully **we'll** have cars that drive themselves and never crash. I think **we'll** probably fly more, and **it might become normal to have your own plane.** On the other hand, many cities **are building more bicycle lanes,** so maybe we **will** use cars less for getting around towns and cities.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: make it personal

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, it really helps if you give personal examples:

1. Do you think it's important for people to have hobbies? Why?

Yes, I think people need to have hobbies because we all need to **do things we enjoy** in our spare time. **In my case**, I find that playing football once a week with some friends helps me to **relax, keep fit and forget about work**. I think it's the same for everyone.

2. Can hobbies have any negative effects?

Yes, if you spend too much time on your hobby, it can **affect other parts of your life**. I **remember that** one of my friends spent most of his time at university **playing computer games** instead of studying. In the end, **he failed most of his exams**.

IELTS Speaking: prepare by writing your answers

Although this is a speaking test, a good way to prepare and practise is by writing your answers down. Here's a quick example:

Describe a recent journey.

I'm going to talk about a recent journey to London. It was a couple of weekends ago, and I decided to visit the capital with some friends. I had never been before, so I wanted to go there to do some sightseeing. I don't have a car, but my friend does, so he volunteered to drive. He had done the trip a few times before, so he knew the way. Maybe it was a bad idea to travel by car because the traffic between Manchester and London was terrible. We spent a lot of time sitting in traffic jams, which were due to roadworks and minor accidents, and it took us the best part of an afternoon to get there...

Note:

The description above is easy to understand, but it contains enough 'less common vocabulary' (underlined) to impress the examiner.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: more long answers

Here are two more answers using the techniques I explained [last week](#):

What do you think are the most important qualities for friends to have?

Maybe the most important things are that friends need to **share common interests** and be **honest with each other**. (why?) **Friends are people we spend a lot of time with**, so it definitely helps if they **enjoy doing the same activities or talking about the same topics** as we do, and of course we need to be able to trust our friends, so **honesty is vital for a good friendship**. (alternatives / example?) I think I would struggle to become friends with someone who didn't have anything in common with me, or who **wasn't reliable** or trustworthy.

How important do you think it is for a person to spend some time alone?

I'd say that **it's essential to spend a bit of time alone**, even if it's just a few minutes a day. (why?) When you have a few minutes to yourself, it's a chance to take stock **and reflect on things**. (why?) **Most of us live such busy lives** that our brains need time to catch up every now and then. (example / alternatives?) Personally, I try to have a bit **of "me time" every day**; I'll go for a coffee or find **a quiet place** to sit and read the newspaper. If I never had any time alone, I think I'd go mad!

IELTS Speaking Part 3: longer answers

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Here are 3 techniques to help you give longer, more detailed answers:

1. Keep asking yourself "why?"
2. Explain the alternatives
3. Give an example

Question:

Do you think that school children should be encouraged to have their own ideas, or is it more important for them to learn what their teachers give them?

Answer:

I think that we should definitely allow children to be creative and have their own ideas. (why?) Children need to develop the ability to think for themselves and solve problems (why?) because as adults they will not always have somebody to guide them or tell them what to do. (alternatives?) If we don't allow children to have their own ideas, they will be less **successful in the adult world**; they will be too reliant on others. (example?) A doctor, for example, might encounter a situation **that he or she hasn't been trained for, but will still be expected to make a decision that could save someone's life**.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: questions about the future

When the examiner asks a question like the one below, you know that you are being tested on your ability to express ideas in the future tense.

How do you think the design of homes will change in the future?

Example answer:

I don't think there will be much change in terms of what houses look like from the outside. In this country, people still like traditional brick or stone houses. Having said that, the design of apartment blocks **will probably continue** to develop, with more and more experimental or futuristic buildings made of glass and metal. **I imagine that it will be the insides of homes that change the most; houses will no doubt be full of technological devices to make our lives easier. Maybe we'll have things like voice-controlled doors, lights and appliances.**

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'history' topic

Questions in part 3 of the speaking test follow on from the topic you were given in part 2. So, after last week's [historic event](#) question, you might be asked some further questions about history and events. For example:

1. What do you think we can learn by studying events of the past?

I think we **can learn a lot by studying history**. Just as individual people learn from their **mistakes, societies can learn from the mistakes made by previous governments or leaders**. For example, from what I've read in the newspapers, many economists are looking back to the time of the Great Depression, around 80 years ago, in order to understand the financial crisis that is currently affecting many countries around the world. Even if we don't always learn from mistakes, **I think it's fascinating to study history because it gives us an insight into who we are and where we come from.**

2. What important events do you think might take place in the future?

It's really difficult to predict what will happen in the future; most of the big, historic events of the past would have been impossible to foresee. For example, I don't think that anyone living 100 years ago could have imagined that people would one day walk on the moon! If I had to guess what might happen in the future, I'd like to think that scientists will invent cures for diseases like cancer, and we'll all live longer.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'politeness' topic

Two weeks ago I showed you a part 2 question about [a situation in which you were polite](#). Let's have a look at some related questions for part 3 of the test:

In your country's culture, how do you show that you are being polite?

We really value politeness and good manners in the UK, and there are many types of polite behaviour. One of the first things we learn as children is to say "please" and "thank you". As adults, I think we are careful not to be too direct in the language we use. For example, we would never say "Bring me the bill" in a restaurant because this kind of direct instruction would sound rude. It would be much more polite to say "Could we have the bill, please?".

Are we less polite with members of our families than with people we don't know?

I suppose it's normal to be a bit more relaxed about politeness with family members. Most people tend to speak in a more informal way at home; in the UK, we still say "please" and "thanks", but it's fine to use colloquial language and things like nicknames that you would never use with someone you didn't know.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: comparing past and present

In part 3 of IELTS speaking, you might be asked to compare the past with the present. The examiner will be listening to your use tenses. For example:

Are there any differences between the types of people who were seen as celebrities in the past and those who are celebrities nowadays?

Yes, I think there have been some big changes in the types of people who become famous. In the past, before the invention of television, I suppose there were very few national or international celebrities; maybe kings and queens, military, political and religious leaders were the only household names. With the advent of TV and radio, performers such as actors and musicians became more well-known. However, we now seem to have a completely new breed of celebrity as a result of 'reality' television programmes; these are people who don't really have any special skills as performers, but who are famous for just being themselves.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: explain, alternative, example

In part 3 of the speaking test, you need to give longer, detailed answers. A good way to do this is by organising your answers according to the following steps:

1. Idea: answer the question directly.
2. Explain: give a reason or explain your answer in more detail.
3. Alternative: explain an alternative (e.g. the opposite) to your answer.
4. Example: give an example to support your answer.

5. Another idea: sometimes you think of another idea while you are speaking. Just add it on the end of your answer.

You can give a really good answer without including all five steps, but you might find it useful to practise including all five, as I've done here:

Why do you think some people prefer to buy products from their own countries rather than imported items?

(*idea*) I suppose it's because those people want to support the economy of the country they live in. (*explain*) If they buy something that was made in their own country, they know that they are contributing to the salaries of workers within the same country, (*alternative*) whereas if they buy imported items, a foreign company and its employees will benefit. (*example*) For example, if I buy some meat that originates from a local farm rather than a farm in another country, I'm helping one of my fellow citizens to carry on in business. (*another idea*) Also, I think that trust is an issue; people might feel that they can trust domestically produced items more than imported ones.

IELTS Speaking part 3: rivers, lakes, sea

1. *What do you think are the functions of rivers nowadays?*

Rivers have various functions. In the UK, they were probably more important in the past because they were used for the transportation of goods, but I suppose this is still the case in many parts of the world. Rivers can be used as a source of renewable energy in the production of hydro-electric power, and they are also a source of fresh water for drinking and irrigation. Leisure activities are another function: fishing, canoeing, swimming, bathing... I'm sure there are many other things I haven't thought of.

2. *What do you think of boats and ships as forms of transportation?*

I'm not really a fan of boats and ships. If I'm going abroad, I like to get to my destination quickly, so I prefer travelling by plane. Of course, ships are vital for the transportation of oil and other heavy cargo.

3. *Why do some people like to live near rivers, lakes or the sea?*

Well, the view is probably a major factor; most people like to look out to sea, or across a river or lake. I'd much prefer to look out of my window onto a natural landscape than an apartment building in a city. Then there's the lifestyle: if you live by the sea, for example, you can lie on the beach, go for a swim, or do water sports like surfing or waterskiing. I definitely wouldn't mind living near a beach at some point in my life!

Note:

These answers are less formal than the essays I write for the writing test, and I say things like "probably" or "I suppose" when I'm not sure about the facts.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: competitions

The following questions come from Cambridge IELTS 7. I've underlined some of the good words and phrases in my answers.

1. *Why do you think some school teachers use competitions as class activities?*

I think teachers use competitions to motivate the children in their classes. I'm sure that teachers try all kinds of activities to engage their pupils, and competitions might be one of the best ways to keep children interested or get them excited. Children love winning things.

2. *Is it a good thing to give prizes to children who do well at school? Why?*

It might be a good idea to encourage children to do well in games or sports, but I don't think we should give children prizes for their academic work. Children need to learn that the reason for studying is to learn useful things that will help them in their lives. I don't like the idea of children thinking that they will only work hard if there is a prize.

3. *Would you say that schools for young children have become more or less competitive since you were that age? Why?*

I'd say that they have become more competitive since I was young. Children now have to take exams from a much younger age, so I think there is more of a focus on doing well in tests. Parents also seem to be getting more competitive; I think that many parents push their children to do extra homework rather than letting them play with friends.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'emotions' topic

The following questions follow on from [this topic](#).

Do you think it's good to show your emotions when you're angry?

I think it depends on the situation and how you show your emotions. I find that if I'm angry with a friend or someone in my family, it's best to tell them what the problem is and try to express how I feel. However, I don't think it helps to argue with people when you're angry; it's better to control the anger and explain what's wrong.

In your opinion, do women show their emotions more than men?

The stereotypical view is that women are more emotional, and in my experience there is some truth in this; my mother, for example, tends to show her feelings much more readily than my father. However, I'm sure that there are exceptions to the stereotype.

Why do you think men tend to show their emotions less than women?

Maybe it's because of the way we are brought up. I think that boys are often taught from an early age not to cry. Also, boys are aware that their friends might see it as a sign of weakness if they show their feelings. Perhaps girls are brought up to be more sensitive to their friends' feelings.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: verb tenses

In part 3 of the IELTS speaking test, you will probably get some questions about the past and the future. The examiner will be listening carefully to make sure you use the correct tense.

- If the examiner mentions “50 years ago”, “when your parents were young” or “when you were a child”, you should answer using the past simple.
- If the question asks you to predict, or if it mentions “in 50 years” or “in the future”, use a future tense (will + infinitive).

Do you think people had easier lives 50 years ago?

Yes, maybe life was simpler and less stressful 50 years ago. The mobile phone didn't exist, so

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I suppose it was easier to forget about work at the end of the day because people couldn't contact you so easily.

Do you think life will be more stressful in the future?

Yes, it probably will be more stressful. As the world gets smaller, employees will probably have to travel to different countries more often and stay in touch with colleagues and clients all over the world. There will also be more competition for jobs and the cost of living will keep going up.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: leisure activities

Here are some questions that a student sent me, with example answers below.

1. What is the relationship between leisure and the economy?

Well, people spend a lot of money on all sorts of leisure activities nowadays, so I think leisure is a very important part of the economy of most countries. Leisure could be anything that people do in their free time, such as eating out, going to the cinema, watching a football match, or staying in a hotel. Millions of people are employed in these areas.

2. How does the economy benefit from people's leisure activities?

The leisure industry makes a huge contribution to the economy. As I said before, it keeps millions of people in employment, and all of these employees pay their taxes and have money to spend on other goods and services. At the same time, most people spend some of their earnings on leisure activities, and this money therefore goes back into the economy.

3. Do men and women enjoy the same type of leisure activities?

Yes and no. I think both men and women enjoy things like eating in restaurants or going to the cinema, but I'm sure there are other activities that are more popular with one gender. For example, I think more men than women go to football matches.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'parties' topic

In part 2 of the speaking test you might be asked to [describe a party](#). Here are some part 3 questions that could follow that topic:

1. What types of party do people have, and why are parties important?

People have parties to celebrate special occasions like birthdays, weddings, or the beginning of a new year. I think it's important to celebrate these things because they are landmarks in our lives. Parties are a good way to bring people together, and they're an opportunity to let off some steam.

2. Why do you think some people like parties but others hate them?

Most people like parties because they have a good time at them - eating a nice meal, chatting to friends, or having a dance. People who don't like them might find social situations difficult because they are shy, or maybe they don't enjoy having to make small talk with people they don't know.

3. Do you think parties will become more popular in the future?

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No, I don't think anything will change. People have always had parties, and I'm sure they always will in the future. Humans need to socialise and enjoy themselves, and parties are one of the best ways to do that.

PS. I've underlined the band 7-9 phrases.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: 'wildlife' topic

Here are some Part 3 questions and band 9 answers for this topic. I've underlined the 'band 7-9' vocabulary.

What effects do you think humans have on wild animals?

Humans have a huge impact on wild animals. We have destroyed a lot of natural habitats, and many animals are in danger of extinction. Tigers and rhinos, for example, are endangered species because of humans. The pollution and waste that we produce also have an effect on animals. In some places there are no fish in the rivers.

What measures could we take to protect wildlife?

I think we need stricter rules to protect natural areas and the wild animals that live there. For example, we should stop cutting down trees in the rain forest. National parks are a good idea because they attract tourists while protecting wildlife.

Is it the responsibility of schools to teach children about protecting wildlife?

Yes, schools can play a big part in educating children about this issue. Children should learn how to look after the natural environment. I think schools already teach children about endangered species and the destruction of rain forests, so hopefully future generations will do a better job of protecting wildlife.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: sports

In the example answers below, I've underlined some of the phrases that examiners would like. They might seem easy to understand, but they are the kind of natural phrases that native speakers use. My answers are at band 9 level.

1. Why do you think sport is important?

I think sport is important for different reasons. For me, doing a sport is about having fun. When I play football, for example, I forget about everything else and just enjoy myself. Also, doing a sport helps you to keep fit and healthy, and it's a good way to socialise and make friends.

2. Do you think famous sportspeople are good role models for children?

I think that sportspeople should be good role models. Children look up to their favourite football players, like David Beckham for example, so I think that these people have an enormous responsibility. They should try to be a good influence, and behave in the right way.

3. Do you agree that sports stars earn too much money?

In my opinion, it's fair that the best sportspeople earn a lot of money. Being a top sportsperson requires hours of practice, and there are millions of sports fans who are willing to pay to see them play. If we don't want sportspeople to earn so much money, we shouldn't go to watch them.

IELTS Speaking: 'questionnaires' topic

IELTS speaking part 2:

Describe a time when you were asked to give your opinion in a questionnaire.

Advice: Say that you were given a questionnaire at the end of one of your school or university courses. Say that the questions asked for your opinions about the teaching, materials, facilities, level of difficulty, how much you enjoyed the course etc.

IELTS speaking part 3:

What kinds of organisation regularly conduct questionnaires?

All kinds of organisations and companies use questionnaires **to find out** what people think about them. For example, university lecturers often ask their students to answer questions about their courses. Someone from a Starbucks **cafe stopped me** in the street yesterday to ask me about **my coffee drinking habits**.

Do you think schools should ask children for their opinions about lessons?

On the one hand, it might be useful for teachers **to get feedback** from children about how much they learnt and **how enjoyable** they found the lessons. However, **children don't necessarily know what's best for them**, and it might do more harm than good to allow them to give opinions about their teachers.

IELTS Speaking: an important conversation

IELTS Speaking Part 2:

Describe an important conversation you had.

IELTS Speaking Part 3:

What are the differences between men's and women's conversations?

What do you think are the characteristics of a good speaker?

For the part 2 question:

My advice is to speak about a conversation you had with your father or mother about your education or career. If you are studying in a different country, describe a conversation about the decision to study abroad. Then you can use ideas from the **'study abroad'** topic and the 'higher education' topic (you can find these topics in my Writing Task 2 lessons).

For the first question in part 3, my advice is to use 'stereotypes':

"I think it depends on the people who are having the conversation, and it depends on the situation, but most people would say that men **talk more about sport or cars**, whereas women talk **about their friends, family and relationships**. Women are supposed to be better at **expressing their feelings**, while men **prefer not to talk about themselves**."

For the second question in part 3, use adjectives and examples:

"I think good speakers are **confident and passionate** about the subject of their speech. They need to be **interesting and engaging**. I think **a speaker's body language** is also really important. A famous example of a great speaker is Barack Obama; he seems to be a naturally inspiring speaker, but I'm sure that practice and preparation are more important than **natural talent**."

IELTS Speaking Part 3: How will the Internet affect our lives?

The "perspectives technique" for generating ideas (see 6th October) can also be useful in the IELTS speaking test. Here's an example:

How do you think the Internet will affect our lives in the future?

Personal perspective:

I think the Internet will have a huge impact on our lives. More and more people are using **social websites** to **keep in touch** with friends. I think the Internet will probably replace TV because most channels **are already available online**.

Economic perspective:

Also, I think we'll do more **online shopping**. **Web-based companies like Amazon** are already really successful. In the future, there will probably be more companies that only sell via the Internet, and I expect we'll spend more money online than in **traditional shops**.

Educational perspective:

Schools and universities might also use the Internet to **provide courses**, **so online learning** will probably become **a normal part of life**.

IELTS Speaking Part 3: children's toys

Here are some questions related to last week's part 2 topic:

1. Do you think it's important for boys to play with "boys' toys" and for girls to only play with "girls' toys"?

I think boys naturally seem to prefer playing with "boys' toys" and girls with "girls' toys". When I was young I had toy **cars, trucks, guns** and things like that, whereas my sister always wanted to play with **dolls**. I don't suppose it really matters if a boy plays with a doll or a girl plays with a toy car, but children learn quickly what toys are supposed to be for boys and for girls.

2. Do you think it's good if parents only buy "educational" toys for their children?

No, I don't agree with only giving children **educational toys**. In my opinion, **children learn** by playing with whatever interests them. **Children invent** their own games, even if they don't have any toys at all. It's important for children just **to have fun**; there will **be plenty of time** for parents to worry about education when their **children get older**.