Course Companion

IELTS Academic

Every topic handout in one volume

全部专题讲义合集

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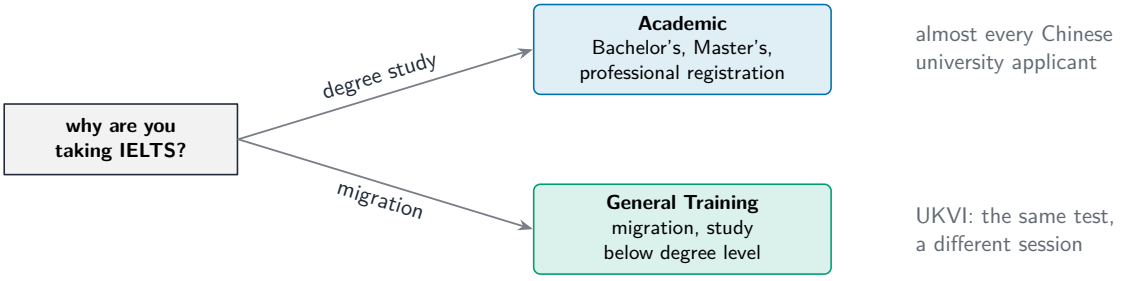
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About the test

IELTS Academic

What IELTS is and who takes it

IELTS is one of the English tests Chinese students most often sit before studying abroad. It is not a test of what you know about English; it is a test of whether you can **use** it – listen to a lecture, read an argument, write a case, and hold a conversation with a stranger.



Academic or General Training

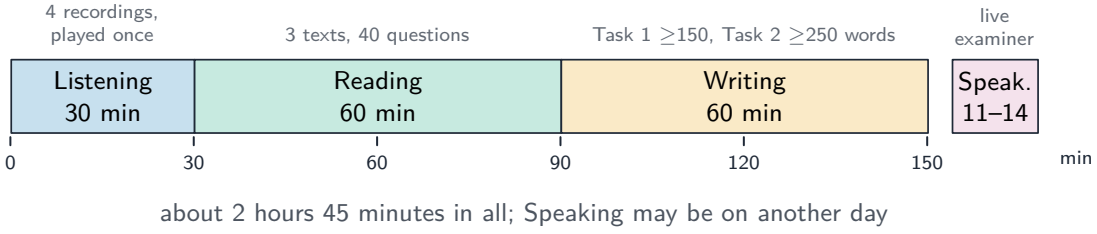
- There are two tests, and you choose one when you book. **IELTS Academic** 学术类 is for study at degree level and above, and for professional registration 职业注册 in fields such as medicine and nursing. **IELTS General Training** 培训类 is for migration 移民 and for study below degree level.
- Almost every Chinese student applying for a Bachelor's or Master's degree needs **Academic**.
- Listening, Reading and Writing are taken back to back in one sitting, with no breaks between them. Speaking is separate: it may be on the same day or up to seven days before or after.
- Most candidates now sit it on **computer** at a test centre; the IELTS partners announced a move away from fully paper-based tests from mid-2026, with dates that vary by market (see the supplement, and check your centre). The questions and the marking are the same either way. Computer results arrive within days rather than about two weeks, and – this matters later – only a computer test qualifies for One Skill Retake.

The four parts and the clock

Part	Time	What it is
Listening	about 30 minutes, 40 questions	4 recordings, played **once only**
Reading	60 minutes, 40 questions	3 long texts, 2,150–2,750 words in total
Writing	60 minutes, 2 tasks	Task 1 at least 150 words, Task 2 at least 250
Speaking	11–14 minutes	a live interview 面试 with an examiner, in three parts



Students about to sit an exam: know the parts, the timing and the rules before the day, so nothing surprises you



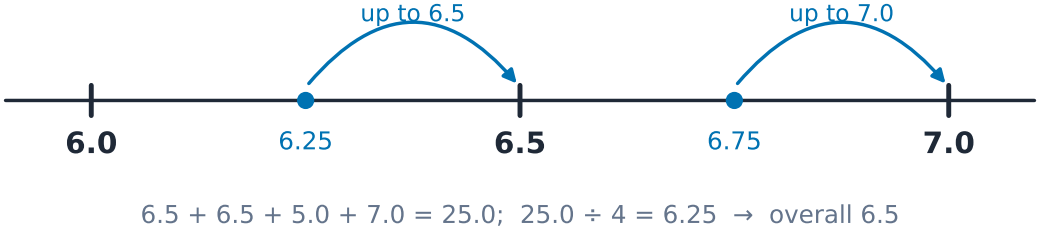
The test to scale: about 2 hours 45 minutes, with Speaking the shortest part

- The whole test takes about **2 hours 45 minutes**.

- **On computer you type answers straight in and get 2 minutes to check** at the end of Listening. Where a paper test is still offered, Listening adds 10 minutes to copy answers onto the answer sheet 答题卡.
- **Reading gives you no extra time at all.** You write on the answer sheet as you go. Students who plan a transfer 誊写 at the end lose marks discovering this on test day.
- Writing Task 2 is worth **twice** as much as Task 1, so budget 20 minutes for Task 1 and 40 for Task 2 – and if you run out of time, run out of it on Task 1.

How the band score works

- Each skill is reported as a **band** 分数档 from 0 to 9, in whole and half steps: 5.5, 6.0, 6.5.
- The **overall band** 总分 is the average of the four skills, rounded to the nearest half band. An average ending in .25 rounds **up** to the next half band; one ending in .75 rounds up to the next whole band.
- So 6.5, 6.5, 5.0 and 7.0 averages 6.25 and is reported as **6.5**.
- △ Universities usually set a minimum overall band **and** a floor on each skill. An overall 7.0 with a 5.5 in Writing does not meet an offer that asks for 7.0 with no skill below 6.5 – a single low skill can sink the result. Work on the lowest number, not the average.
- In Listening and Reading each correct answer earns one mark, and your mark out of 40 becomes a band. IELTS publishes only four points on that scale – on Academic Reading, 15 marks reaches band 5, 23 reaches band 6, 30 reaches band 7 and 35 reaches band 8 – so a practice score tells you which band you have reached, not a precise number.
- Writing and Speaking are judged by a trained examiner 考官 against four criteria 评分标准 each, which are set out in the Writing and Speaking sections of these notes.



Averages ending .25 or .75 round up to the next half band

■ **Worked example: does this result meet the offer?**

An offer asks for **overall 6.5 with no skill below 6.0**.

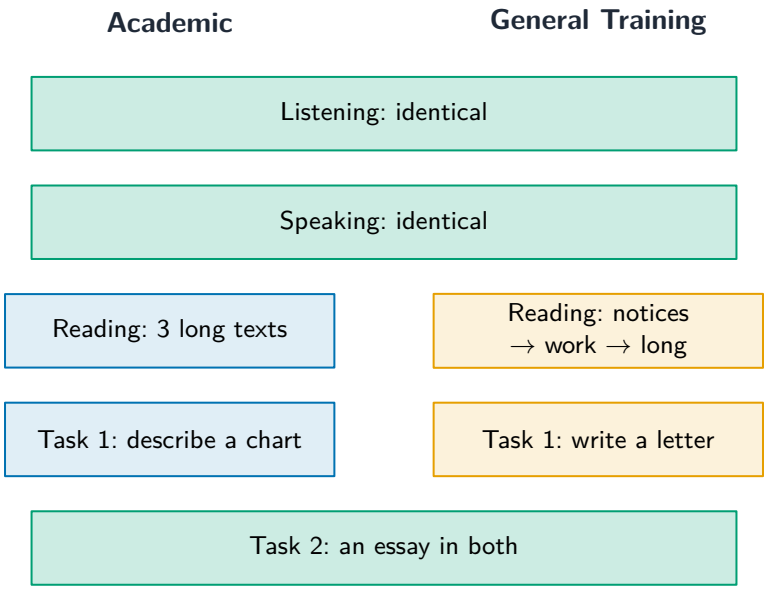
Candidate	L	R	W	S	Average	Overall	Meets the offer?
Mei	7.0	7.0	5.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	No: Writing 5.5
Bo	6.5	6.0	6.0	6.5	6.25	6.5	Yes
Lin	6.0	6.5	6.0	6.0	6.125	6.0	No: overall 6.0

- Bo's 6.25 rounds **up** to 6.5. Lin's 6.125 is closer to 6.0 than to 6.5, so it stays at **6.0**.
- Mei has the highest average and still fails the offer: one skill below the floor is enough.

Academic, General Training and UKVI

- **Listening and Speaking are exactly the same test** in Academic and General Training. Two of your four skills need no separate preparation at all.
- **Reading differs.** Academic uses three long texts from books, journals and newspapers written for a general reader. General Training starts with everyday notices and advertisements, moves to workplace texts, and ends with one longer general text.
- **Writing Task 1 differs.** Academic asks you to describe a graph, table, chart or diagram. General Training asks you to write a letter. Task 2 is an essay in both.
- **IELTS for UKVI** is the same test again – same questions, same format, same difficulty, same scoring. Only the administration differs: a UKVI session, and a Test Report Form 成绩单 that says so. If a UK university or visa route asks for it, book that session and prepare identically.
- **IELTS Life Skills** is a different, much smaller test: Speaking and Listening only, at CEFR A1, A2 or B1, marked Pass or Fail rather than banded. It is for certain visa routes, never for university study.

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Two of four skills are identical

One Skill Retake

This rule should change how you prepare, so it is worth knowing before you book.

- If one skill lets you down, you may retake **that skill alone** instead of the whole test.
- Any one of Listening, Reading, Writing or Speaking – **one skill, once** for each full test.
- Two conditions: the full test must have been **IELTS on computer** at a centre that offers the service, and the retake must be **within 60 days** of it.
- You then receive a new Test Report Form carrying the new score for that skill and the original scores for the other three.
- △ The practical consequence: find out **which single skill** is short of your target and repair that one. For many candidates it is Writing, and the repair is a few weeks of marked essays rather than a whole second test.

Exam tips

- Book the **computer** test unless you have a reason not to. Faster results, and the retake option exists only there.
- Learn the question types until they are automatic, then practise under the clock. The task types are stable; it is the topics that keep changing.
- Write your target for each skill on the first page of your notebook. Prepare against the lowest number, not the average.

- Sources, checked on 19 September 2026: IELTS Academic, General Training, scoring in detail, One Skill Retake, IELTS for UKVI.

Vocabulary card meanings

Academic: The module for people who want to study at university. professional registration: Legal permission to work in a regulated job. General Training: The module for work, training or migration rather than university. answer sheet: The printed grid for listening and reading answers. transfer: Copying answers onto the official form before the time ends. band: A score step from 0 to 9. examiner: The trained person who scores speaking or writing. criteria: The official points on which a score is decided. Test Report Form: The official document that records the scores.

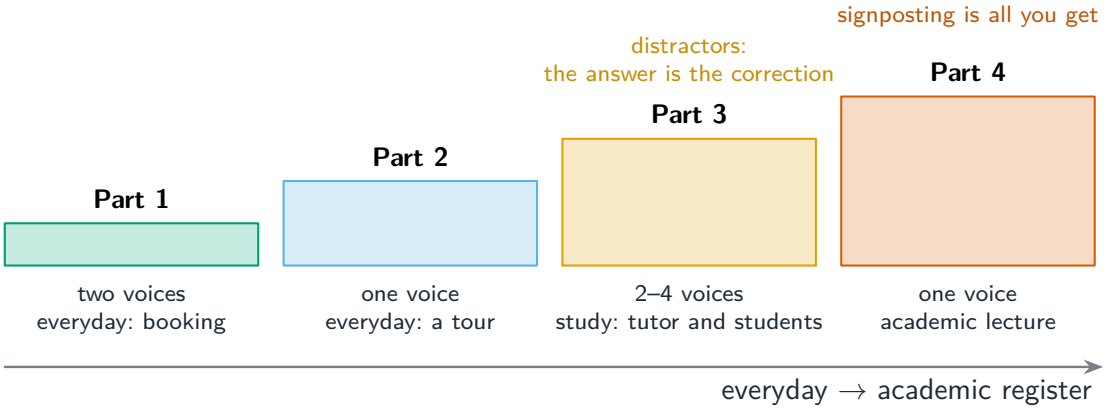
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Listening

IELTS Academic

The four parts, and what changes between them

Listening is 40 questions in about 30 minutes, and the recording is **played once only**. The four parts get harder in a predictable way, so know which one you are in.



Everyday to academic

Part	Voices	Situation	What makes it hard
1	two, in conversation	everyday: booking, enrolling, enquiring	names and numbers spelled out
2	one speaker	everyday: a talk, a tour, an announcement	a lot of detail in one voice
3	two to four, in discussion	study: students and a tutor	speakers disagree and change their minds
4	one speaker	academic: a lecture	long stretches with no pause, and abstract vocabulary

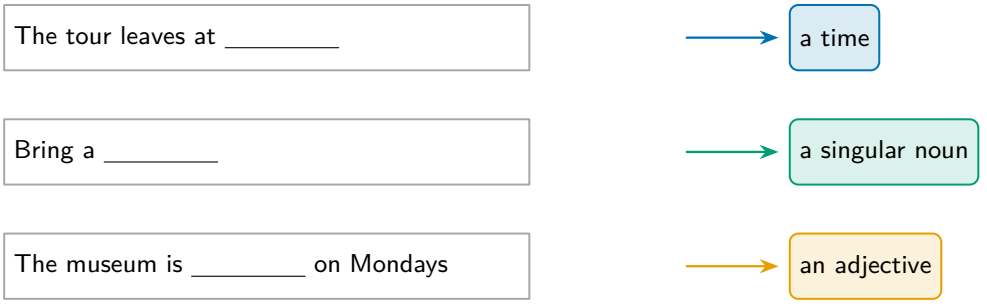
- The **register** 语域 moves from everyday to academic across the four parts, and the vocabulary follows it.
- Parts 1 and 2 are usually the most accessible marks. A candidate aiming high cannot afford to give many of them away, because Parts 3 and 4 are harder to bank.

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- Part 3 is where a **distractor** 干扰项 does most damage, because one speaker says something, another corrects it, and the answer is the correction.
- Part 4 has no second speaker to signal a change of topic, so the **signposting** 路标词 in the language is all you get: *firstly*, *turning now to*, *the key point here*.

Reading the question before the audio

You are given time to read each section's questions before it plays. This **preparation time** 审题时间 is part of the test, not a courtesy. Use every second of it: it is the only time in the test when you can think before you hear.



NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER: three words is wrong

Predict the word class first

- **Predict the word class** 词性. *The tour leaves at* _____ needs a time. *Bring a* _____ needs a noun. *The museum is* _____ *on Mondays* needs an adjective. Knowing what kind of word you are waiting for is most of the work.
- **Underline the word limit** in the instruction. *NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER* means a three-word answer is wrong even if it is true. This rule is enforced exactly.
- **Underline the words that cannot change.** A name, a number or a date will be said as it is written. Everything else will be **paraphrased** 同义改写 – the recording almost never uses the question's own words, and a candidate listening for them hears nothing.
- Move your eye to the next question as soon as you have written an answer. The recording does not wait, and dwelling on one lost question can cost you the next one too.

Spelling, plurals and numbers

Understanding comes first: you cannot spell an answer you did not catch. But these are where answers you *did* understand still get marked wrong, and every one of them is avoidable.



Numbers on a keypad: in the listening test write numbers as figures and check each digit as you hear it

stress
thir**TEEN** = 13
THIRty = 30

letter pairs
G / J M / N
S / F E / I / A

final -s
"two ticket**s**"
ticket scores zero

spelling must be correct; British and American spellings both accepted

Three avoidable losses

- **Spelling must be correct.** A correct answer spelled wrong scores zero. British and American spellings are both accepted (*organise* / *organize*, *centre* / *center*).
- **Plurals are marked strictly.** If the recording says *two tickets*, then *ticket* is wrong. Listen for the final **-s**; Mandarin has no final consonant there, so it is easy to miss.
- **Copy the grammar of the gap.** If the sentence reads *the museum has three* _____, the answer must be plural whether you heard the -s or not.
- **Numbers**: *thirteen* and *thirty* are the classic pair – the stress moves to the second syllable in *thirteen*. Dates may be written 21 March or March 21; both are accepted.

- **Letters**: names are spelled out at normal speed. Practise the pairs Chinese candidates confuse – G and J, M and N, S and F, and the vowel letters E, I and A.
- Write the answer exactly as you hear it. Do not "improve" it into a full sentence.

■ **Worked example: a form, from prediction to answer**

The form, with the instruction *Write ONE WORD AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer*:

> *Customer name: Anna 1* _____
> *Date of move: 2* _____ *July*
> *Number of boxes needed: 3* _____

Before the audio. 1 a family name, spelled out letter by letter; 2 a day of the month; 3 a number. One word or one number each.

The recording (an invented script):

> *"And your surname? – It's Greaves: G-R-E-A-V-E-S. – And you're moving on the thirtieth? – No, the thirteenth: the thirtieth is a Sunday. – Right, the thirteenth. How many boxes? – Well, I thought twenty, but my sister says it'll need at least twenty-five."*

Answers. 1 **Greaves** – copied letter by letter; *Graves* scores zero. 2 **13** – the first date was corrected, and *thirTEEN* has its stress at the end. 3 **25** – *I thought twenty, but…* signals the change; the final figure is the answer.

Map, plan and diagram labelling

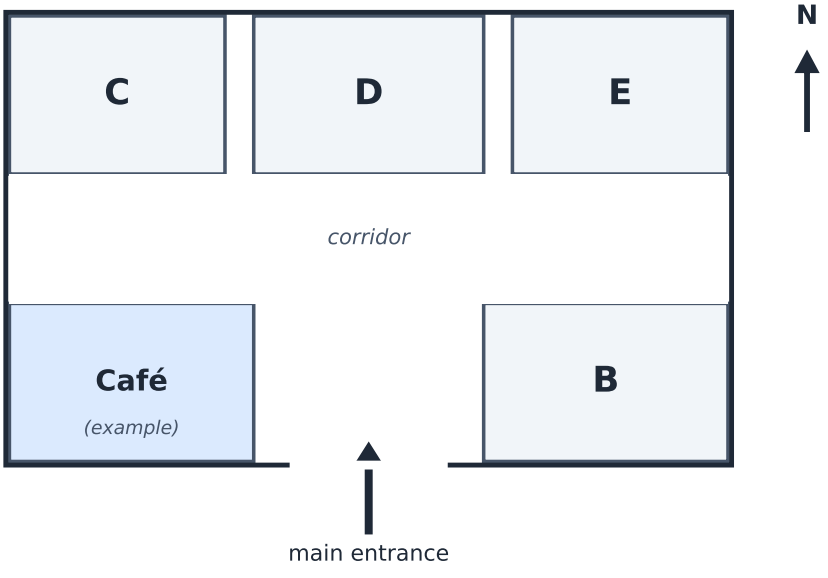
- Before it starts, find **north** and fix your orientation. The speaker will describe the route as somebody walking it.
- Learn the small set of position words and use them actively: *opposite*, *adjacent to*, *at the far end of*, *on your left as you come in*, *beyond*, *between … and …*, *a short way past*.
- The speaker moves in order, so the labels come in order too. If you lose one, skip to the next landmark rather than re-reading the map.
- On a diagram of a machine or a process, the description almost always runs in the direction the material moves.

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A fingerpost: for map labelling, fix your starting point and follow the direction words (north of, opposite, next to)

Worked example. Look at the plan for ten seconds before you read the script: north is up, and you walk in from the south.



Find north and the entrance first; the example room shows how answers are written

> *As you come in through the main entrance, the café is on your left. You'll smell it before you see it. The ticket office is opposite the café, on your right. Walk straight ahead, across the corridor, and the cinema is the room in front of you. The lockers are in the corner to the left of the cinema,*

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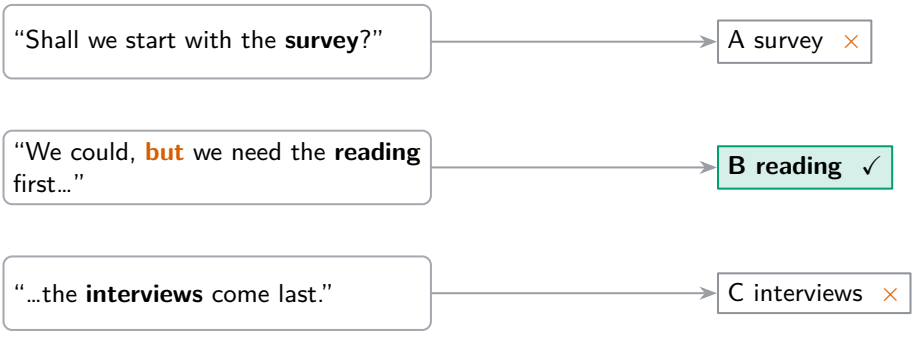
and the toilets are beyond the ticket office, in the back corner on the right.

Label the plan: 1 ticket office _____ 2 cinema _____ 3 lockers _____ 4 toilets _____

Answers. 1 **B** (*opposite the café*) · 2 **D** (*straight ahead, across the corridor*) · 3 **C** (*in the corner to the left of the cinema*) · 4 **E** (*beyond the ticket office*). Each answer came from one position phrase, and the phrases came in the order you walked.

Matching and multiple choice

- **Expect more than one option to be mentioned.** In Parts 3 and 4 the recording often names two or even all three options, but only one fits the question once everything has been said. Do not tick the first option you hear; wait for the speakers to finish: *I thought about doing the survey first, but actually the reading has to come first.*
- Listen for the **correction signals**: *actually*, *in fact*, *although*, *I'd say rather*, *on second thoughts*, *mind you*. They show that an earlier idea is being changed or limited, so check what the speaker finally commits to – sometimes that is the corrected idea, sometimes the original one survives.
- A **synonym** 同义词 in the recording is the normal case, not the exception.
- In a matching task, read all the options first and group the ones that mean nearly the same thing – those are the pair the item is testing.
- An option that simply echoes a word you heard is not automatically right. Options are usually paraphrased, so match the meaning, not the sound.



correction signals: *actually, but, in fact, on second thoughts, mind you*

The answer is the correction

Worked example. *Which part of the project will the students do first?* A the survey B the reading C the interviews

> *"Shall we start with the survey? – We could, but we need the reading first to know what questions to ask. – Fair enough. And the interviews come last, after the survey."*

All three options are mentioned. The survey is suggested first, then pushed back by *but we need the reading first*, and the other speaker agrees (*fair enough*). The answer is **B**. The option you heard first was the distractor: the item is built to catch a candidate who ticks it.

Exam tips

- **Never stop to fix a missed answer.** You will lose the next one too. Leave it blank, keep up, and come back in the checking time.
- **Guess every blank.** There is no penalty for a wrong answer, so an empty space is a mark you have chosen to give away.
- On paper, use the **10 minutes** of transfer time to check spellings and plurals, not to re-think answers. On computer you have 2 minutes and the same advice.
- Practise with the recording played **once**, with no pause and no rewind. Practising any other way trains a skill the test does not measure.
- Sources, checked on 19 September 2026: Listening format, scoring in detail.

Vocabulary card meanings

distractor: A wrong option or a heard detail that looks tempting. signposting: Words that show where a talk is going, such as next or however. paraphrase: The same meaning written in different words. preparation time: The seconds before a recording plays in which you read its questions.

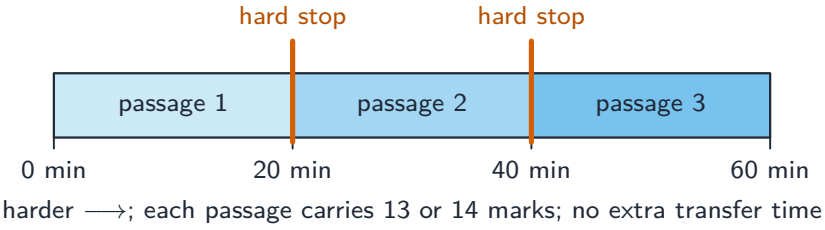
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Reading

IELTS Academic

The three passages and the 60-minute clock

Academic Reading is 40 questions on three passages, 2,150–2,750 words in total, taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers written for a general reader rather than a specialist.



harder ⟶; each passage carries 13 or 14 marks; no extra transfer time

Twenty minutes a passage, with hard stops at 20 and 40: passage 3 is worth as much as passage 1.

- **There is no extra transfer time.** You write on the answer sheet as you go. Students who plan to copy their answers across at the end find the clock has already stopped.
- **Twenty minutes per passage**, and the passages get harder. If passage 1 takes you thirty minutes, you will not finish passage 3, and passage 3 carries the same 13 or 14 marks.
- The **register** 语域 of the texts is a general reader's, not a specialist's: you need no subject knowledge, and an answer you "know" from outside the passage is a trap.
- Put a **hard stop** at 20 and 40 minutes. Move on with blanks and come back; never let an early passage eat a later one.
- **Questions follow the passage in order** for most task types. If you have found question 17 in paragraph D, question 18 is almost never in paragraph B.
- You will not have time to read a passage properly and then answer. Read the questions, then **scan** 扫读 for the place each one is answered, then read that place carefully. Save **skimming** 略读 – a fast read for the shape of the passage – for the first minute.

True, False, Not Given

Many candidates lose marks here in one specific way: **Not Given is confused with False**.

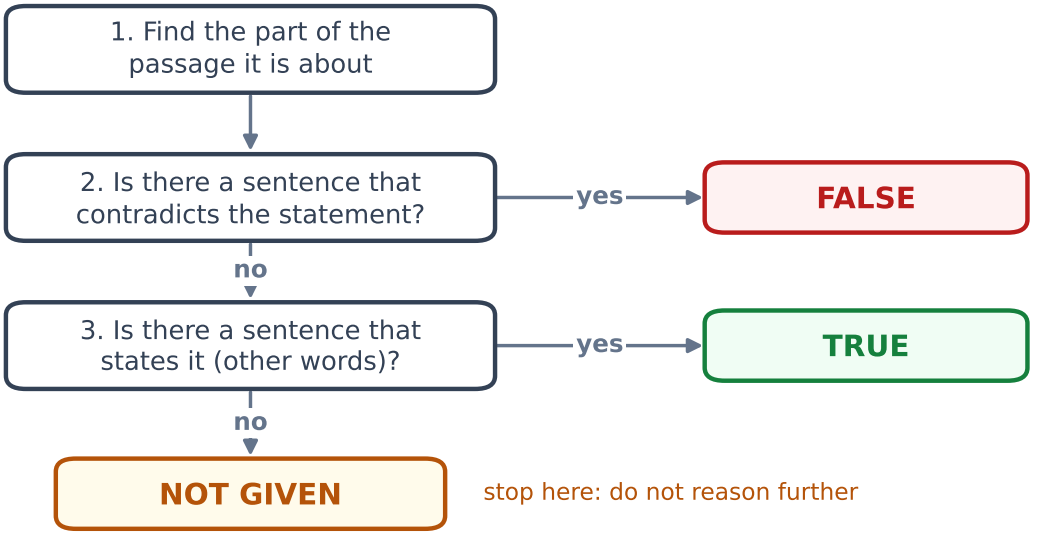
- **True** – the passage **says** it. The wording will differ; the meaning will not.

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- **False** – the passage says the **opposite**. There is a specific sentence that contradicts the statement.
- **Not Given** – the passage does not say, either way. It may be obviously true in the real world. It may be something the writer would surely agree with. That does not matter.

The test:

1. Find the part of the passage the statement is about.
2. Ask: is there a sentence here that **contradicts** it? If yes → **False**.
3. If no: is there a sentence here that **states** it? If yes → **True**.
4. If neither → **Not Given**. Do not reason further.



Contradiction first, then statement; anything else is Not Given

- △ The commonest mistake is to decide *the passage does not say this, so it is false.* That is exactly what Not Given means.
- Watch **qualifiers** 限定词: *all*, *always*, *never*, *only*, *the main reason*. A statement saying *the main cause* against a passage saying only *one cause* is **Not Given**, not True: the passage never ranks the causes. It becomes **False** only if the passage says the main cause was something else.
- **Yes / No / Not Given** is the same task applied to the writer's **opinion** rather than to facts. Ask what the writer thinks, not what is true.
- Answer with the exact words the instruction gives – *TRUE*, *FALSE*, *NOT GIVEN*, or *YES*, *NO*, *NOT GIVEN*. *Not mentioned*, or *YES* on a True/False task, is marked wrong.

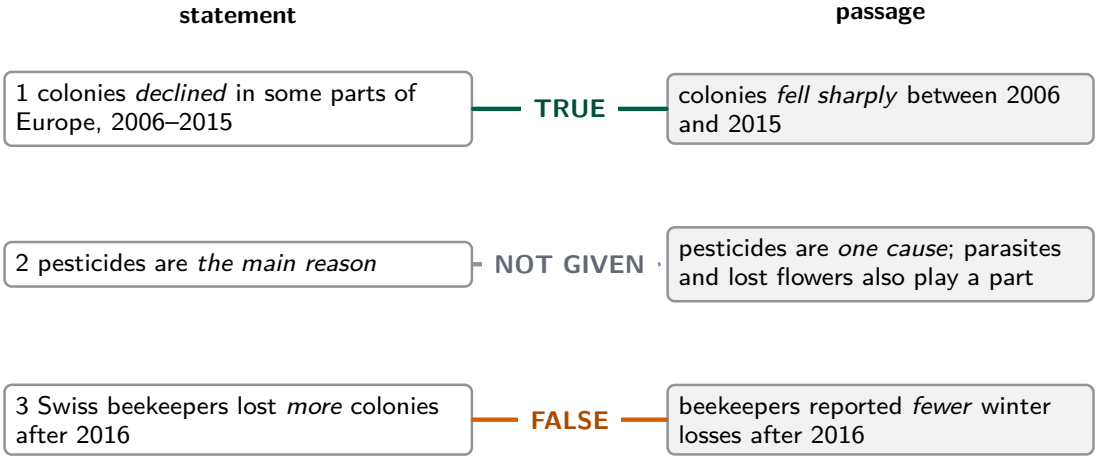
Worked example: three statements, one paragraph

A short invented passage, written for practice:

> *Honeybee colonies in parts of Europe fell sharply between 2006 and 2015. Pesticides are one cause that researchers have studied closely, but parasites and the loss of wild flowers also play a part. In Switzerland, beekeepers reported fewer winter losses after 2016, when a common pesticide was restricted.*

1. *Honeybee colonies declined in some parts of Europe between 2006 and 2015.* – **TRUE.** *fell sharply* = *declined*, *parts of* = *some parts of*; the dates match.
2. *Pesticides are the main reason for the decline in bee colonies.* – **NOT GIVEN.** The passage names pesticides as *one cause* among three and never ranks them. Nothing says another cause is the main one either, so it is not False.
3. *Swiss beekeepers lost more colonies in winter after 2016.* – **FALSE.** The passage says *fewer* winter losses: a direct contradiction.

The procedure did the work: find the sentence, look for a contradiction, then for a statement, and stop.



Match each statement to its sentence, then look for a contradiction

Matching headings

- The trap is matching a **word**. A heading containing *pollution* and a paragraph containing *pollution* is the pairing the test expects you to make wrongly.
- Match the paragraph's **function** instead: what is this paragraph *doing*? Introducing a problem, giving a history, presenting evidence against, drawing a conclusion.
- The **topic sentence** 主题句, usually the first, carries that function far more often than the middle does; the last sentence often confirms it.

- Do the paragraphs you are sure of first and cross those headings off. There are usually more headings than paragraphs, so some are never used; eliminating is faster than matching.
- Often two headings look like near-synonyms. Those two are the pair the item is testing; decide between them last, when the others are gone.

■ **Worked example: function, not words**

> *A. For centuries, people in dry regions have stored rainwater in tanks and underground chambers. … B. Today, however, these systems are being abandoned as piped water reaches more villages. …*

Headings: (i) *The history of water storage in dry places* (ii) *Why traditional water storage is in decline* (iii) *How rainwater is cleaned before use*

- Paragraph A gives a **history** (*for centuries*) → **(i)**.
- Paragraph B describes a **change** and its cause (*however … being abandoned … as piped water reaches*) → **(ii)**.
- **(iii)** shares the word *rainwater* with paragraph A but describes a process neither paragraph explains: the word match is the trap.

Completion tasks and the grammar of the gap

Sentence, summary, note, table, flow-chart and diagram completion all work the same way.

…grown on a _____ scale

after *a*: singular countable noun or adjective + noun, consonant sound

…the method has been _____

after *have been*: past participle or *-ing*

then: words from the passage, unchanged, within the word limit;
a hyphenated word or a number counts as one

Read the grammar of the gap

- **Obey the word limit.** *NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS* means a three-word answer is wrong even when it is the right idea. A hyphenated word counts as one; a number counts as one.
- **Words must come from the passage**, unchanged, in most completion tasks. Do not substitute a synonym 同义词 of your own.
- **Read the grammar of the gap** – its **word class** 词性 – before you look for the answer. If the gap follows *a*, you need a singular countable noun (perhaps with an

adjective) beginning with a consonant sound. If it follows *have been*, you need a past participle or an *-ing* form. This alone eliminates most wrong candidates.

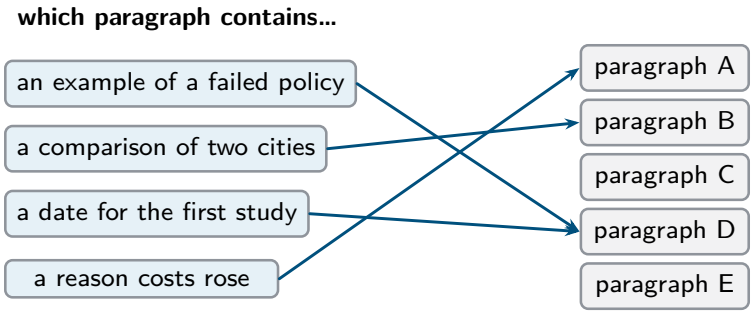
- In summary completion, the summary paraphrases one section of the passage, not the whole thing. Find that section first.
- If a box of options is given, the answer is in the box – and the box will contain words that fit the grammar but not the meaning.

> ■ **Worked example: read the gap first**
>
> Summary: *Rainwater systems were once common, but many villages now prefer a _____ supply.* (ONE WORD ONLY)
>
> - The gap follows *a* and comes before *supply*, so it must be an adjective or a noun used like one, starting with a consonant sound.
> - The passage says *piped water reaches more villages* → **piped**. One word, taken unchanged from the passage, and *a piped supply* reads correctly.
> - *modern* fits the grammar, but it is not in the passage: a word of your own is marked wrong.

Matching information and matching features

- **Matching information** ("which paragraph contains…") does **not** follow passage order, and a paragraph can be used more than once. Leave it until last: by then you know the passage.
- Look for the *specific* thing named – an example, a comparison, a date, a reason – rather than the topic.
- **Matching features** pairs statements with people, places or studies, and the statements are not in passage order either. Underline each name in the passage first; the names are the fastest thing on the page to find.
- **Matching sentence endings** is a grammar task as much as a meaning task. Only some endings fit each beginning grammatically, which cuts the list before you think about content.
- Vocabulary in context: guess from the **word parts** – a **prefix** 前缀 or a **suffix** 后缀 often gives the sense – and from the sentence around it. You are never expected to know every word, and looking one up in your head costs time you do not have.

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not in passage order; D is used twice, C and E not at all

Matching information: no passage order, and a paragraph can be used twice

Exam tips

- **Never leave a blank.** There is no penalty for a wrong answer, and a blank is a mark given away. Fill every gap in the last two minutes even if you are guessing.
- Transfer answers **as you go**, in capitals, and check that the number on the answer sheet matches the number of the question.
- Practise the whole 60 minutes in one sitting. Reading three passages in three separate sessions trains none of the pacing the test is really measuring.
- If a question is taking more than ninety seconds, mark it, move on, and return. The last question of a passage is worth the same as the first.
- Sources, checked on 19 September 2026: Reading format, scoring in detail.

Vocabulary card meanings

qualifier: A word that limits a claim, such as some, often or may.

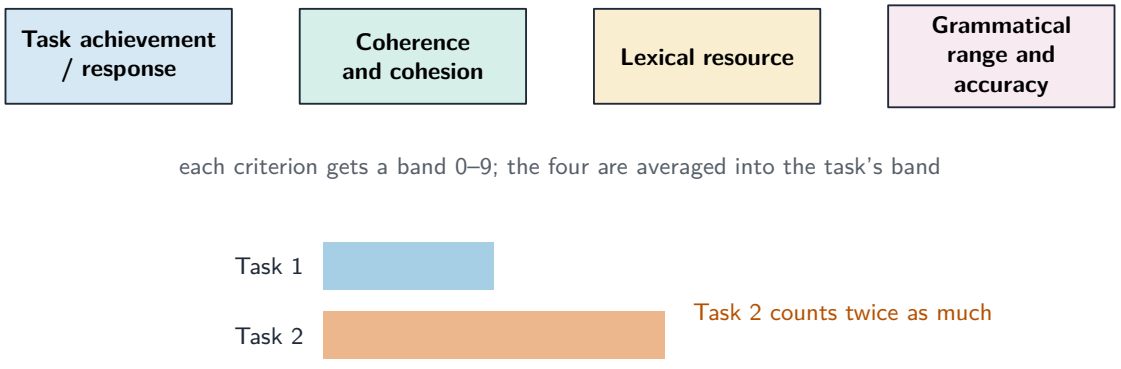
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Writing

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How Writing is marked

Writing is 60 minutes and two tasks. Each is marked against **four criteria**, each worth a band from 0 to 9, and the four are averaged into the task's band. **Task 2 counts twice as much as Task 1** in the Writing score.



Four criteria per task, averaged; Task 2 carries double weight

Criterion	Task 1	Task 2
1	**Task achievement** 任务完成 – did you select and report the key features, with an overview?	**Task response** 任务回应 – did you answer every part, with a clear position?
2	**Coherence and cohesion** 连贯与衔接 – does the writing progress logically, one idea per paragraph, with the right linking words?	same
3	**Lexical resource** 词汇丰富度 – range, precision and **collocation** 词语搭配	same
4	**Grammatical range and accuracy** 语法准确度 – variety of structures, and how often errors appear	same

- Two thirds of the Writing band comes from Task 2, so give it 40 of the 60 minutes. Running out of time on Task 1 costs half as much as running out on Task 2 – still a real loss, so finish both.

- Under the minimum length – 150 words for Task 1, 250 for Task 2 – almost always costs on criterion 1, because a short answer rarely covers the task fully. Count if you are unsure; the count costs 20 seconds.
- You must write in **full connected prose**. Notes and bullet points score as an unfinished answer.

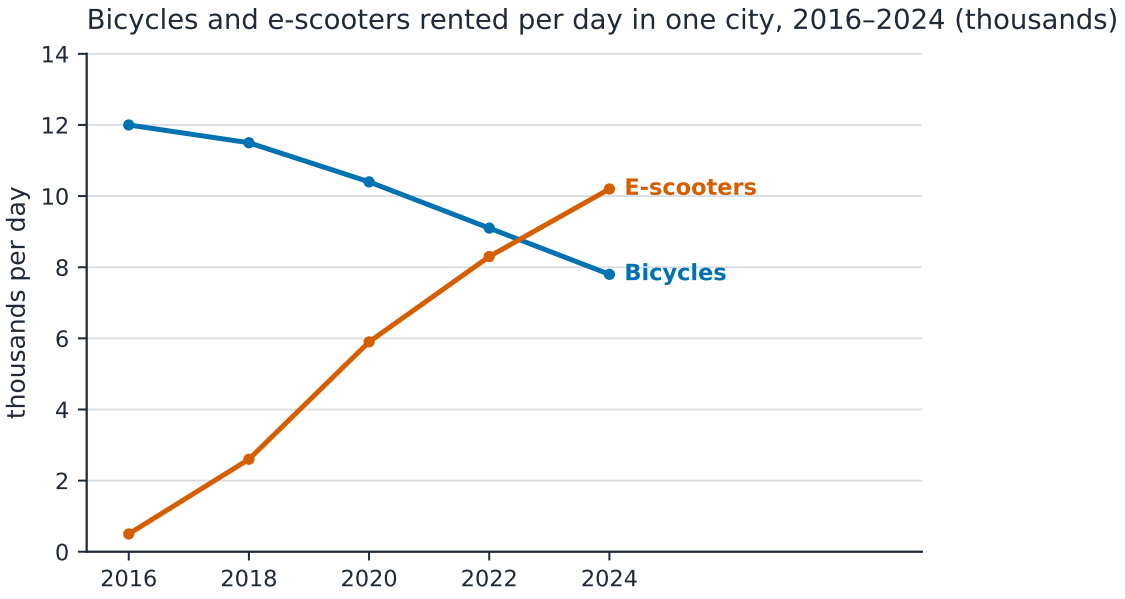
Task 1 – select, report, and write the overview

Task 1 asks you to describe a graph, table, chart, diagram or map **in your own words**.

- **There is no opinion in Task 1.** No *I think*, no *this is because*, no recommendation. A sentence of opinion or an invented cause is irrelevant detail, and it pulls Task achievement down.
- **The overview** 概述 is one or two sentences saying what the data does **overall** – the biggest movement, the largest category, the crossing point, the thing that did not change. In the public band descriptors, detail reported with **no clear overview** belongs to band 5 for Task achievement, and band 6 already expects one – so the overview is the cheapest band you will ever earn.
- A reliable structure: rewrite the question in your own words (1 sentence) → overview (1–2 sentences) → two body paragraphs of grouped detail.
- **Group, do not narrate.** Two paragraphs – one for what rose, one for what fell; or one for the two large categories, one for the three small ones. A year-by-year account of every line is a typical band-5 answer.
- **Quote figures selectively.** Enough to support each statement, not every number on the chart.
- A process diagram needs no data at all: say how many stages there are and whether it is a loop or a straight line, then run through it in the passive.

> **Worked example.** Look for the three things an overview must catch: a fall that speeds up, a fast rise and one crossing.

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Bicycle rentals fall, e-scooter rentals rise, and the lines cross between 2022 and 2024

> *The line graph compares how many bicycles and e-scooters were rented each day in one city between 2016 and 2024.* (paraphrase)
>
> *Overall, bicycle rentals declined throughout the eight years, more quickly after 2018, while e-scooter rentals grew rapidly, and e-scooters overtook bicycles between 2022 and 2024.* (overview)
>
> *Bicycle rentals fell throughout the period. They dipped only slightly at first, from 12,000 a day in 2016 to 11,500 in 2018, but the decline then quickened, to 10,400 in 2020 and 9,100 in 2022, before ending at 7,800 in 2024. This was a drop of 4,200, or roughly a third.* (detail paragraph 1: the falling line)
>
> *E-scooter rentals, by contrast, rose from a very low base of just 500 a day. The figure climbed to 2,600 in 2018 and more than doubled to 5,900 by 2020. Bicycles were still slightly ahead in 2022, at 9,100 against 8,300, but e-scooters overtook them soon afterwards and reached 10,200 by 2024, about twenty times their starting level and 2,400 more than bicycles.* (detail paragraph 2: the rising line and the crossing)

That is just over 150 words: four short paragraphs, every sentence checkable against the graph. Notice what the model leaves out: any reason why riders switched, even the obvious one, that a scooter does not make you sweat before class. The chart does not say why, so neither do you.

The same data, weaker. Compare this opening from a typical weaker answer:

> *The graph is about bicycles and e-scooters. In 2016 bicycles was 12 and e-scooters was 0.5. In 2018 bicycles was 11.5 and e-scooters was 2.6. In 2020 …*

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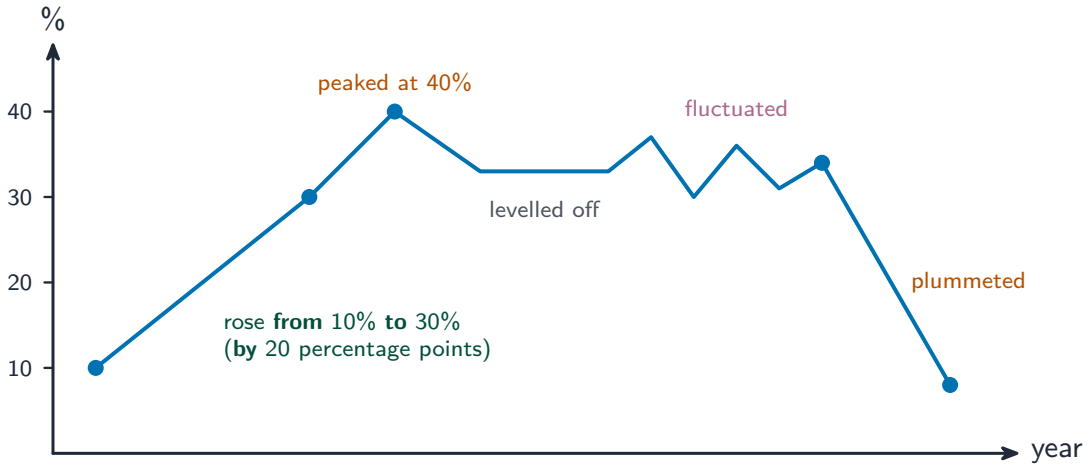
It narrates year by year, never says what happened **overall**, drops the units (12 what?) and repeats one structure with an agreement error (*bicycles was*). Every number is accurate and the answer still scores low: accuracy is necessary, selection is what is rewarded.

Task 1 – the language of change

- Verbs: *rise, increase, climb, soar, peak, level off, plateau, fall, decline, drop, plummet, fluctuate, remain stable.*
- A **trend** 趋势 is the direction over the whole period; a **fluctuation** 波动 is movement without one.
- Nouns from the same verbs: *a rise in, a sharp fall in, a steady increase in.*
- △ **The prepositions are where marks are lost.** *Rise* ***by*** *20* is the size of the change; *rise* ***to*** *20* is the end point; *rise* ***from*** *10* ***to*** *30* gives both. Many candidates write *increased of*, or *increased to 20%* when they mean *by*.
- △ **Percentage and percentage point are different.** From 20% to 24% is a rise of **4 percentage points**, or of 20%. Writing "a rise of 4%" there is a factual error.
- Approximation: *just over, just under, roughly, around, nearly, approximately.*
- Comparison: *twice as many as, three times the figure for, by far the largest, the same as, slightly higher than.*
- A **proportion** 比例 is a share of a whole; an **amount** 数量 is not, and a pie chart shows only proportions. "Households spent more on housing" is wrong unless you also know the total; "a larger share went on housing" is right.



A price board: describe change with a verb and an adverb (rose sharply, fell slightly) or an adjective and a noun (a sharp rise)



One line, five verbs: and from, to and by say different things

Task 2 – answering the actual question

Read the question twice and decide which of the five forms it is, because each one has its own way of going wrong.

agree or disagree	trap: on the fence: no position
discuss both views + opinion	trap: two views and no opinion
advantages and disadvantages	trap: listing both, never deciding
causes and solutions	trap: a solution matching no cause
two-part question	trap: forgetting the first part

partial answer caps Task response at band 5; band 7 needs a position held throughout

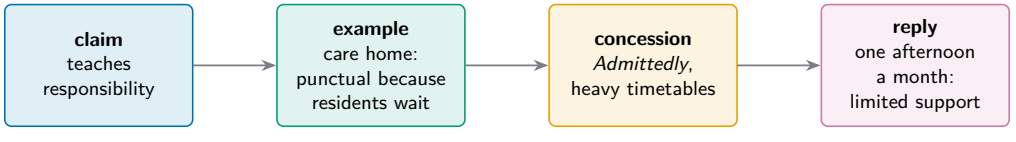
Five forms, five traps

Form	What it asks	The trap
Agree or disagree	choose a position	sitting on the fence – no clear position for the examiner to follow
Discuss both views and give your opinion	both views **and** your own	giving the two views and no opinion
Advantages and disadvantages	both; *outweigh* means decide	listing four of each and never deciding
Causes and solutions	both halves, matched	a solution that answers no cause you gave
Two-part question	two answers	answering the second and forgetting the first

- **Answer every part.** The public descriptors put a response that addresses the task only partially at band 5 for Task response, however well written the rest is.
- **Hold one position.** Band 7 in Task response needs a position that is clear **throughout**. If your introduction disagrees and your conclusion says "both sides have merit", the examiner can no longer see where you stand, and that criterion falls.
- **Support, do not assert.** Every main idea needs a reason, an example, or a consequence traced one step further. *Pollution is bad for health* is an assertion; *particles from traffic aggravate asthma, which is why clinics near main roads report more attendances* is support.
- A useful shape: introduction (rewrite + position) → body 1 (first reason, developed) → body 2 (second reason, developed) → conclusion (restate position, no new material).
- **Answer the strongest objection.** A **concession** 让步 names what the other side gets right; a **counter-argument** 反驳 then answers it. Together they show you have a position rather than a preference.

■ Worked example: one body paragraph, two versions

Some people think that all secondary students should do unpaid work in their community. To what extent do you agree or disagree?



Version A lists sentences: "hot topic", "many things", no position

Claim, example, concession, reply

Version A

> *Nowadays, community work is a hot topic. There are many advantages and disadvantages. Students can learn many things. However, they are very busy. In conclusion, community work has both good and bad sides.*

Version B

> *The strongest argument for compulsory community work is that it teaches responsibility in a way that classrooms cannot. A student who spends two hours a week helping at a care home learns to be punctual because elderly residents are waiting for them, not because a teacher is checking. Admittedly, students already have heavy timetables, and an extra obligation could add stress. However, a single afternoon a month would be enough to build the habit without harming exam preparation, which is why I support the idea in a limited form.*

What the four criteria see:

Criterion	Version A	Version B
Task response	no position	clear, limited support
Coherence	sentences listed	claim, example, concession, reply
Vocabulary	*hot topic*, *many things*	*punctual*, *obligation*
Grammar	simple sentences only	*because*, *which is why* clauses

Version B does not use rarer words for their own sake: each one says something more exact than the word it replaces.

The template trap

Chinese candidates are often taught openers and "high-level" phrases to memorise. Examiners are trained to discount **memorised language** 背诵句式, so a template-heavy essay reads as a *lower* Lexical resource band, not a higher one.

~~With the development of society,~~ → *(start with the topic)*

~~It is undeniable that~~ → *Clearly,* or nothing

~~Every coin has two sides~~ → *(state the two sides)*

~~augment the problem~~ → *aggravate* or *make it worse*

~~Last but not least~~ → *Finally,*

a common word used precisely beats a rare word used wrongly

Delete what carries no information

Delete	Write instead
With the development of society / the economy	*(nothing – start with the topic)*
It is undeniable that / There is no doubt that	*Clearly,* or nothing
Every coin has two sides	*(state the two sides)*
As far as I am concerned	*I think / In my view*
more and more people	*a growing number of people* / a figure
in today's fast-paced world	*(nothing)*
Last but not least	*Finally,*

- The problem is not that these are wrong English. It is that they carry **no information**, and the examiner has seen them a thousand times.
- The same applies to a rare word used out of collocation. *Augment the problem* is not better than *make the problem worse*; it is worse, because *augment* does not collocate with *problem* (*aggravate* does). **A common word used precisely beats a rare word used wrongly.**
- Mechanical linkers hurt too. *Firstly, Moreover, Furthermore, Last but not least* at the start of every sentence lowers Coherence and cohesion. Real cohesion comes from pronouns, repeated noun phrases and the order of ideas.

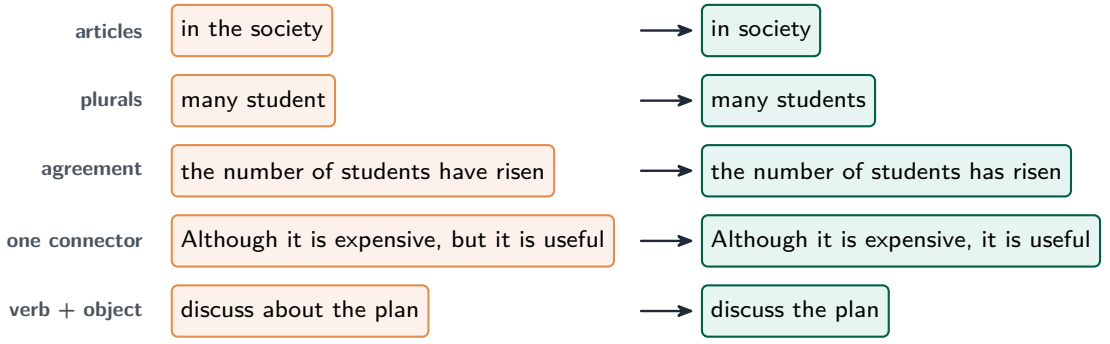
Errors Chinese speakers make most

These are systematic, so hunt for the **pattern**, not the one instance.

- **Articles** 冠词 – Mandarin has none. *The government should build more school* → *schools*; *in the society* → *in society*.
- **Plurals** – an unmarked plural is one of the most frequent errors. *Many student* → *many students*; *informations*, *advices*, *equipments* are uncountable and have no plural at all.
- **Tense not carried through** – a paragraph that starts in the past drifts into the present.
- **Subject–verb agreement** – *the number of students have risen* → *has risen*.
- **Although ... but ...** and **Because ... so ...** – English uses one connector, not two. *Although it is expensive, but it is useful* → drop *but*.
- **Comma splices** – two full sentences joined by a comma. Use a full stop or a conjunction.
- **An extra preposition after a verb** – *discuss about*, *emphasise on*, *affect to* are all wrong; those verbs take a direct object: *discuss the plan*, *emphasise the risk*.

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- How often errors appear is part of criterion 4, so fixing two of these patterns consistently is one of the fastest ways to raise it – faster than learning new vocabulary.



Fix the pattern, not the one instance

Exam tips

- Spend **5 minutes planning Task 2**. An essay with a plan is a different band from the same ideas written as they arrive.
- Do **Task 2 first** if you tend to run out of time. It is worth double.
- Count your words once, at the end. On paper, learn how many words your own handwriting puts on a line and count lines instead; on computer the screen shows the count.
- Leave 3 minutes to reread for articles, plurals and tense. Those three are the slips a quick reread catches best.
- Sources, checked on 19 September 2026: Writing format, scoring in detail.

Vocabulary card meanings

task achievement: How completely a Task 1 response covers what the prompt asks.

task response: How fully a Task 2 essay answers the question that was set.

coherence and cohesion: How clearly ideas are ordered and linked.

lexical resource: The range and accuracy of the words a candidate uses.

collocation: Words that commonly go together.

grammatical range and accuracy: How varied and how correct the sentence structures are.

overview: The main features of a Task 1 visual, such as a trend, a process or a map, placed wherever the response needs them.

fluctuation: A rise and fall, rather than a steady change in one direction.

amount: How much of something there is, used when it is not counted one by one.

counter-argument: A point directed against a claim. In an essay it may challenge the writer's thesis, or be the opposing view the writer then answers.

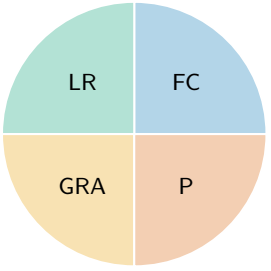
memorised language: Sentences learned by heart before the exam, which may still fit the prompt or may not.

Speaking

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What the examiner is listening for

Speaking is 11 to 14 minutes with a real examiner, in three parts, and it is recorded. You are marked on four criteria, each 0 to 9, averaged into your Speaking band.



FC: keep going, ideas linked; not speed

LR: paraphrase when a word won't come

GRA: several tenses, several clause types

P: a quarter of the band, often least practised

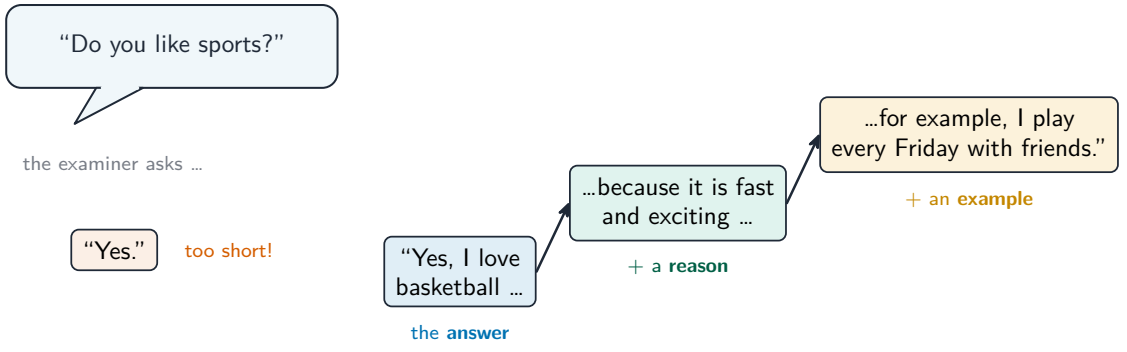
Four equal criteria

Criterion	What it means in practice
Fluency and coherence 流利度与连贯性	can you keep going, at a natural speed, with ideas that follow each other? Self-correction is fine; long silences and constant restarting are not
Lexical resource	can you talk about a topic you did not prepare, and paraphrase when a word will not come?
Grammatical range and accuracy	do you use more than one tense and more than one clause type, and how often do errors appear?
Pronunciation 发音	can a listener understand you without effort?

- **Pronunciation is a quarter of the band.** It is often the least practised criterion, which makes it a cheap quarter to improve.
- **You are not marked on your opinions.** There is no right answer. An interesting answer and a dull one score the same if the English is the same.
- **Fluency is not speed.** Speaking fast with no structure scores below speaking steadily with visible organisation.
- The examiner follows a script and controls the time. Being interrupted is normal and is not a bad sign.

Part 1 – answer, then add one reason

Four to five minutes of questions about yourself: home, family, work, study, and two or three familiar topics.



Answer, then add more: a reason and an example make a full turn

- **Never answer in one word.** *Do you like cooking? – Yes* on its own gives the examiner almost nothing to assess. The pattern is **answer + one reason or example**, two or three sentences.
- *Yes, I do – I cook dinner most evenings because it's the one part of the day I'm not looking at a screen.* That is the whole technique, and it fits almost any Part 1 question.
- Do not give a speech either. Part 1 has many questions; a 40-second answer costs you the chance to show range on the next one.
- Expect present, past and future in this part: *do you…*, *did you… when you were younger*, *will you…*. Answer in the tense you were asked in.
- Prepare **topics, not scripts**. A memorised answer is audible and is discounted.

Part 2 – the two-minute long turn

You get a card with a topic and four prompts, **one minute to prepare** with paper and pencil, then you speak for **one to two minutes**. The examiner stops you when two minutes are up, so aim to keep going until then: the longer turn gives more evidence of your English.



Part 2 gives you one minute to plan and up to two minutes to speak: keep talking until the examiner stops you

Describe a song that means a lot to you.

You should say:

what the song is

when you first heard it

where you usually listen to it

and explain why it means a lot to you.

one minute of notes

1 *grandmother · old radio*

2 *age 8 · rainy Sunday*

3 *bus · headphones*

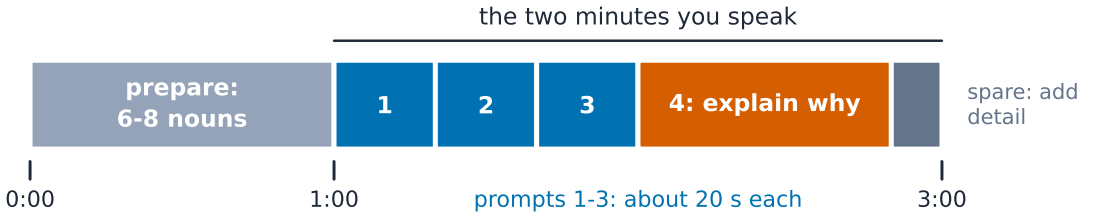
4 *comfort · exam week*

nouns, not sentences

An original cue card and the one-minute notes it should produce

- **Many candidates dry up well before two minutes.** That is the main difficulty, and it is fixed by practice with a timer, not by better ideas.
- **Use the preparation minute to write nouns, not sentences.** Six to eight words, one or two per prompt. Sentences cannot be read aloud naturally; nouns trigger speech.
- **The four prompts are your paragraphs**, in order, and the last one – usually *and explain why…* – deserves the most time. Spend about 20 seconds on each of the first three and 50 on the last, which leaves about 10 seconds of spare detail.
- If you finish early, go back and add detail: *what it looked like*, *who else was there*, *how I felt at the time*, *what I would do differently*. Detail is always available.

- Past tenses dominate this part, because many cards ask you to *describe a time when…*. Get the irregular verbs right; they are the errors an examiner cannot miss.
- It is fine to invent. Nobody is checking whether the story is true.



Part 2 on one clock: a minute of nouns, then two minutes with the last prompt longest

■ Worked example: from notes to a long turn

Card: *Describe a time you helped someone. You should say: who you helped, what the problem was, how you helped, and explain how you felt about it.*
Notes (one minute): *neighbour Mrs Wu · laptop · photos lost · cloud, video call · proud, patient*
The start of a turn built from those notes (an invented answer):

> *"I'd like to talk about my neighbour, Mrs Wu, who's in her seventies and lives alone. Last winter her laptop stopped turning on, and she was really upset, because all her photos of her grandchildren were on it. I went round after school and, luckily, it turned out her photos were already backed up to the cloud – she just didn't know. So I set up a tablet for her and showed her how to make video calls as well. … I felt quite proud, to be honest, but I also learned to be patient: I had to show her the same steps four or five times…"*

- Each note became one stretch of speech, in the card's order, and the last prompt (*how you felt*) is where the remaining time goes: keep talking about it until the examiner stops you.
- Past tenses carry the story (*stopped*, *went*, *showed*, *had to*), and a relative clause (*who's in her seventies*) adds range.
- Linking phrases such as *luckily*, *it turned out* and *to be honest* join the events and keep the turn moving without long silences: fluency, not speed.

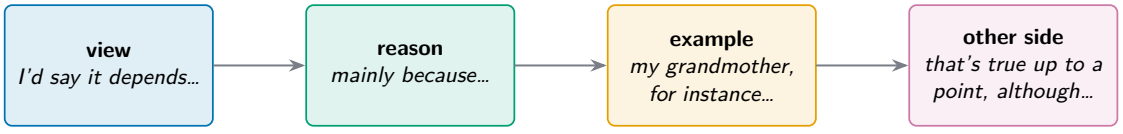
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Part 3 – develop, hedge, disagree politely

Four to five minutes of abstract discussion about the Part 2 topic, at a higher level.



A discussion: in Part 3, give a view, support it with a reason or example, and qualify it where it needs a limit



hedging and comparing tenses show the range criterion 3 measures

Develop, do not stop at one sentence

- **A one-sentence answer is the standard failure here.** Part 3 is where the higher bands are won, and the skill is **developing**: state a view, give a reason, name an example, then consider the other side.
- **Fluency** here means continuity and organisation, not speed.
- **Hedging** 委婉表达 is grammar as well as politeness, and it shows range: *it tends to be*, *it depends on*, *broadly speaking*, *I'd say*, *on the whole*, *that's probably truer of… than of…*.
- Disagree with the examiner when you want to; it is not rude, and it shows language: *I see why people say that, but I'd argue…*, *That's true up to a point, although…*.
- Expect **comparison** (*how has this changed?*), **speculation** (*what will happen…?*) and **evaluation** (*is that a good thing?*). Each needs a different tense, which is exactly what criterion 3 is measuring.

- If you do not understand, ask: *Sorry, do you mean… ?* That costs nothing. Answering a question you did not understand costs marks.

> **Worked example.** *Do you think older people rely on their families too much for help with technology?*
>
> *"I'd say it depends on the family. Broadly speaking, older people do tend to ask their children first, mainly because it's quicker than reading instructions. But I'm not sure that's 'too much': in my grandparents' case, those calls are also a reason to talk every week. That said, it would probably help if community centres ran more short classes, so people had a second option."*

View (*it depends*), reason (*quicker than reading instructions*), example (*my grandparents*), the other side (*that said…*), and three hedges (*I'd say*, *broadly speaking*, *probably*): one answer, developed in about 30 seconds.

Pronunciation for Chinese speakers

Chinese-L1 pronunciation errors come from a small, enumerable set. Targeted work on them pays off faster than general "speaking practice".

- **Final consonants.** Mandarin syllables end in a vowel, -n or -ng, so English final consonants get dropped or a vowel is added. *Wanted* becomes *wan*; *desk* becomes *des*. This one change does more for intelligibility than anything else on the list.
- **-ed and plural -s.** These are grammar **and** pronunciation. Dropping them is heard as a tense or number error as well as a pronunciation one, so it can affect two criteria at once. *Walked* ends in a /t/ sound, *needed* gains a whole extra syllable, *lived* ends in a /d/ sound – three different endings.
- **/θ/ and /ð/** (*think*, *this*) do not exist in Mandarin and usually become /s/ and /z/. Put the tongue tip between the teeth; it feels exaggerated and sounds correct.
- **/l/, /n/ and /r/** at the start of a word, and **/v/ versus /w/** – *light* / *night*, *vest* / *west*, *vine* / *wine*.
- A **syllable** 音节 is the unit stress sits on.
- **Word stress** 重音 in long words. *phoTOgraphy*, *photoGRAPHic*, *ecoNOMic*, *eCONomy*. A word with the stress on the wrong syllable is often not recognised at all, even when every sound is right.
- **Intonation** 语调 is the tune of a sentence; **sentence stress** 句重音 is which words carry the weight.
- **Sentence stress and intonation.** English stresses the content words and reduces the rest, and a flat, evenly-stressed delivery is heard as monotonous. Rising intonation on a list, falling at the end of a statement.
- Record yourself for two minutes and listen back. It is uncomfortable and it is the fastest diagnostic available.



Big dots are loud: one per word, and the content words carry the sentence's beat

Exam tips

- **Arrive with topics, not scripts.** Memorised answers are recognised and discounted, and they fall apart when the follow-up question comes.
- Practise Part 2 with a **timer**, out loud, standing up, until two minutes is comfortable. Few habits pay off faster.
- If you make a mistake, correct it once and move on. Repeatedly restarting a sentence damages Fluency more than the original error did.
- Speak at your normal pace. Speed is not fluency, and a nervous rush makes every pronunciation problem worse.
- Sources, checked on 19 September 2026: Speaking format, scoring in detail.

Vocabulary card meanings

fluency and coherence: How smoothly and how clearly a speaker keeps going. hedging: Softening a claim with words such as may, tend to or it seems. sentence stress: The louder syllables that show which words in a sentence matter.

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