

IELTS Speaking Part 2

Describe a holiday or celebration that you have attended and enjoyed.

You should say:

- what was celebrated
- where it was celebrated
- who you celebrated it with

and say why you enjoyed this holiday or celebration.

Model answer

I have a **soft spot for** weddings. I would even say it's my **guilty pleasure**. So when I got invited to one as **best man**, I jumped at the opportunity. This kind of honour comes at a price - one of them is that you have to give a speech. Anyway, it was my friend who was getting married, so I knew the guy in and and therefore it wasn't a problem. I went there with my wife, who knew **the bride and the groom** just as well as I did.

The celebration was to take place in a small local restaurant that was booked for the occasion. It wasn't a grand event, not even close. The newly-weds wanted to keep it nice and cozy, with family and closest friends as guests. It worked out miraculously well. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, it felt very **wholesome** and honest. I guess it was mostly owing to the smaller scale of the celebration and the fact that everyone knew each other quite well.

IELTS Speaking Part 3

Family celebrations

Why do you think it's important to have family celebrations and what benefits do they have?

They are as important as ever. If anything, they are more important nowadays for at least one reason - **social cohesion**. Given the rapid pace of today's life, people are usually short on time. This means they don't get to meet that often, so they have to **resort to** texts. That's why nowadays there has to be a bigger reason for people to get together. And thankfully, it exists: family celebrations.

Birthdays, weddings, anniversaries—these have always **warranted** a small party to be thrown up. More importantly, today they bring relatives closer together. These relatives that would otherwise be stuck at home swiping through their mobile apps. Therefore, I am strongly convinced that such celebrations help keep family **bonds** stronger.

How have traditional family celebrations changed over the years?

Well, in the past, families used to gather around the table, share a meal, and engage in various activities that united them. However, with the **advent** of technology and a fast-paced lifestyle, many families now prefer to celebrate separately or in smaller groups.

Additionally, cultural and societal changes have also impacted traditional family celebrations. The family structure has changed from the nuclear family to blended families, single-parent families, same-sex couples, and more. This has resulted in a shift in the way families celebrate special events. So I guess we could say that the way family celebrations have evolved is a good display of the general cultural evolution.

Some cultures have more family-centred celebrations than others. Why do you think this is the case?

I can say that this could be attributed to different factors such as historical traditions, cultural values, societal norms, and beliefs. In the majority of cultures, the family is seen as a fundamental unit of society. Owing to this fact, family-centered celebrations are given great importance. This shouldn't come as a surprise, since gatherings with family in mind promote bonding and solidarity.

This, however, is not without exceptions. Some first-world countries experience an opposite phenomenon. Family members slowly **drift apart** due to difference in interests, beliefs, and lifestyles in general. It is an unfortunate fact of life that not everyone holds family traditions as **sacred**. This could be attributed to free-thinking and overall independence seen as greater values in the more developed part of the world. While these are good notions **per se**, anecdotal evidence suggests that sometimes they might backfire and **undermine** fundamental family values.

Holidays and celebrations**In many countries, national holidays are synonymous with large gatherings and festivities. Are there any possible negative effects of that?**

There are two consequences that I'd like to point out. The first one is **littering** caused by the masses. Well, you know how people can be. After any major public celebration, the city is a literal mess, garbage bins filled to the brim. Public services just can't handle the influx of people and the associated by-products of their consumption, I guess. This is an issue worth looking into, **proactivity** could be key here.

Another concern is that people tend to consume alcoholic beverages at such events. Some get all **uppity** and aggressive, eventually it all degenerates into **petty conflicts**. This naturally puts some people off, and they feel less inclined to attend such gatherings in the future.

Do you think that traditional celebrations are still as important in modern society?

Traditional celebrations are still important in modern society as they help people connect to their culture, history and community. They bring people closer together to celebrate common values, beliefs, traditions. Traditional celebrations also play a vital role in preserving **cultural heritage** and passing it on to future generations. As we witness the world globalise, which is not necessarily a bad trend, the cultural aspects **come under threat**, blending and slowly fading away. Said celebrations can act as a safeguard against **homogenization**.

What are some of the main differences between a formal event and an informal one?

I guess we have to draw the line between the two to avoid any further confusion. A formal event is one where you have a strictly-defined dress code, a list of guests, and other **boundaries**. You are expected to show on time, socialise with others, act in a reserved manner. This doesn't sound like much fun, and it usually isn't!

An informal gathering is much more lax in terms of rules and generally less **uptight**. You are expected to dress and act casually and even **crashing a party** is acceptable. The food and drinks are going to be less fancy, and bringing your own bottle can be expected, depending on cultural context. All of this **lends itself nicely to** people of all walks of life mingling in a relaxed manner. This sounds like a proper party, if you ask me!

Holidays and celebrations vocabulary

Best man - a male person who helps the groom (the man) at a wedding. One of best man's duties is to give a speech during the wedding party.

The bride and the groom - the female and the male partner getting married, respectively.

Social cohesion - connection between people. *Nowadays social cohesion is at its lowest levels because meeting new people and keeping in touch with them has become less necessary.*

Bond (n) - feeling of love, friendship or connection. *The younger you are, the easier it is for you to form bonds with others.*

Drift apart - to gradually become less connected to another person, usually because you don't see or meet with them.

Petty (adj) - unimportant, not serious.

Cultural heritage - qualities and traditions passed over generations. Art objects, architecture and even history can all be considered to be part of cultural heritage.

Uptight (adj) - (here) too worried and serious, to the point of being nervous. *The host was rather uptight about loud music so we decided to leave the party and go to a pub instead.*

Crash a party - to come to a party without invitation, especially if you don't know the host or the guests.

General vocabulary

Soft spot - if you have a soft spot for something, it means you like it very much, especially if it has good memories associated with it (i.e. you are sentimental about it).

Guilty pleasure - something that you like, especially if you are ashamed of it or think it might not be good for you.

Wholesome (adj) - used approvingly; something that has a positive effect or influence on people. *The celebration was very wholesome, with no strong alcohol or fast-food dishes.*

Resort to (v) - to choose something without much enthusiasm, usually because there is no alternative. *I don't want to resort to shouting at her, but I will if I need to.*

Warrant (v) - to make something necessary. *Your problems with your roommate do not warrant me coming back from another city to help you.*

Advent (n) - invention or creation.

Sacred (adj) - extremely important, having almost religious significance. *Trust among friends is sacred.*

Per se (latin) - on its own. *Alcohol per se is not extremely dangerous, but intoxicated behaviour can impose significant risks to both the user and others.*

Undermine (v) - to affect something negatively, especially in a way that is not immediately obvious or visible.

Littering (n) - disposing of garbage in an inappropriate way, e.g. not putting it in the garbage bin.

Proactivity (n) - the practice of taking action before something undesirable takes place. *Proactivity is very important when treating many serious diseases.*

Uppity (adj) - (informal) having unwarranted feeling of self-importance; arrogant.

Come under threat - to be at risk.

Homogenization (n) - the process of becoming similar. Can be both positive and negative depending on the context. *Homogenization of ideas can lead to stagnation in science because differences of opinion is important for progress.*

Boundaries (n) - (here) limitations, rules or regulations.

Lend nicely to - to be useful or convenient for something. *Spain's warm weather all year round lends itself nicely to hobbies like cycling.*