

## IELTS Speaking Topic – Holidays and celebrations #3

This is a sample response for IELTS Speaking Part 2 and 3. In addition to the model answer there are highlighted words and phrases. **Teal** is for vocabulary relating to this topic, **yellow** is for generally useful words and phrases.

## IELTS Speaking Part 2

Talk about a celebration that is associated with a particular season

You should say:

- what the celebration is
- when it takes place
- how it is celebrated

and say if it is celebrated in other countries.

### Model answer

To tell the truth, there are many celebrations that are season-related, but one **stands out** in particular. It takes place on June 21st and it celebrates summer solstice. Basically, it is the day when we get the most daylight in a year and the night is the shortest. Older people believe this night to have some kind of mystic significance, that spirits of the past come to life and all and any kind of magic can happen. Younger folks enjoy the more **pragmatic** aspects of the day, like how the daylight lasts almost till midnight. Everyone seems to find something enjoyable about this day. By the way, it is not a state holiday - I mean, we don't get a day off on this occasion. However, sometimes it **coincides with** the weekend and that's when it gets particularly enjoyable.

While other countries naturally have summer solstices on the same day, I am not sure if it is widely recognised as a holiday. It **has more to do with** nature rather than some national achievement, so I doubt it really **caught on** around the world. I honestly have never given it much thought - I am sure that some people are aware of the solstice and maybe even have their own small celebrations. In any case, I think this is a great reason to spend some time with your family, hang out with friends and loved ones.

## IELTS Speaking Part 3

### Celebrations and traditions

What role do traditions play in modern celebrations and events?

I'd say that traditions provide a sense of **continuity** and connection to the past and create a shared **cultural heritage** that brings people together. In other words, they give us an idea where we are now and in what direction we are heading, culturally speaking. Traditions also help people understand who they are and find their place in the world.

During modern celebrations and events, traditions often serve as a unifying force, creating a sense of community and **belonging**. They engage people in meaningful rituals that have been **passed down through generations**, often reinforcing important values and beliefs. For instance, Christmas traditional activities like **caroling**, gift-giving, and the lighting of the tree **make for** a happy and **festive** atmosphere.

Finally, **upholding** traditions make people feel more comfortable at an event. One example is weddings, which consists of a series of certain acts and ceremonies. They give the participants a general idea of what is going to happen next, who has to take part in it, what kind of presents they should be giving - things like that.

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### Should cultural traditions be preserved? Why or why not?

There are strong arguments for preserving traditions. One that comes to mind right away is that traditions bring people together. A very basic example is a family dinner that takes place once in a while and serves as a great reason for members of **extended family** to come together. This is especially true today, when people are too busy and going somewhere takes more time and money than it did in the past.

Another reason to **nurture** traditions is the ever-increasing problem of identity. We live in troubling times of globalisation, which has both good and bad sides to it. One of the worrying things is how it makes everything more or less the same. One of the things likely **to fall victim to it** is cultural identity. People with no respect to culture of their **ancestors** might feel lost in terms of where they truly belong. Respecting traditions helps prevent that, or at least should be the most effective way of **battling against** it.

### National holidays

#### Do you think national holidays unite people from diverse cultures and backgrounds? Why or why not?

I believe that such holidays can indeed **bring** people from different cultures **together** as they share a common celebration of their country and its history. People born and raised in the country get to enjoy the long-held traditions while those who have moved there from elsewhere get to learn more about it and to **seamlessly integrate** into the society. Holidays can serve as a symbol of national pride, providing an opportunity for people to come together and connect over shared values and traditions.

National holidays can also promote a sense of belonging and **inclusivity**, as diverse communities celebrate their shared history and **commemorate** important events. Nobody feels **left out** as during such festivities everybody tends to feel more welcoming and **charitable**. All in all, celebrations of that kind serve to improve **social cohesion** and help **bridge cultural gaps**.

#### What would happen if a country didn't have any national holidays?

The consequences would be numerous and all of them quite negative. Firstly, there would be no **designated** days off for people to rest, celebrate or engage in cultural or religious traditions. This could lead to increased stress, burnout, and **skew** the overall **work-life balance** - this alone impacts the society greatly nowadays.

Moreover, without national celebrations there may be a loss of national unity, as holidays often serve as a way to honor the history, culture, and values of a country. Without national holidays, there may be a decreased sense of shared history and community. Finally, no national holidays mean negative consequences for the economy, as holidays often stimulate consumer spending and tourism. Without additional days off, there may be a decrease in consumer spending and travel, harming certain industries and businesses.

### Holidays and celebrations vocabulary

**Coincide** (v) - (in relation to holidays or celebrations) - to happen on the same day or to move to a special day that holds some significance.

**Cultural heritage** - customs and traditions that we received from the past generations. *Preserving cultural heritage is one of the prime aims of future generations.*

**Belonging** (n) - (here) sense of being a part of something else, not being an alien. *Jim had travelled across the entire country until he finally found a town he could truly feel he belonged to.*

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**Pass down through generations** - to give something either tangible (i.e. inheritance) or intangible (knowledge, traditions) to the youth. *This mansion and the surrounding estate had been passed down to generations for centuries.*

**Caroling** (n) - an act of group of people singing Christmas songs door-to-door or in public places. The purpose of caroling is to spread joy and cheer during the holiday season. In some cases, carolers may also collect donations for charities or non-profit organizations.

**Festive** (adj) - characterised by holiday spirit and and general uplift. *In anticipation for holiday season festive atmosphere spread throughout the city.*

**Uphold** (v) - to follow, support or maintain some practice or tradition.

**Ancestors** (n) - either direct or indirect relatives that lived before your time.

**Bring together** (v) - (here) unite people, either literally (physically) or figuratively (in what they think or believe in). *The traditional holiday movie-watching marathons would normally bring our entire family together.*

**Integrate** (v) - to make something a natural part of something bigger. *He succeeded in integrating western business practices into his own family enterprise.*

**Commemorate** (v) - to remember and honor a significant person or event by doing something special or creating a permanent marker like a monument or a plaque. It is a way to keep the memory alive for future generations.

**Left out** (adj) - if somebody feels left out, they can't feel like a part of something they would have liked to be. *We know that Chris is not fond of big parties, but if we hadn't invited him, he would've felt left out.*

**Charitable** (adj) - feeling or being especially generous either with or without a reason.

**Work-life balance** - having equal amounts of fun and productivity. *My work-life balance doesn't seem to have much 'life' in it nowadays.*

## General vocabulary

**Stand out** (phr v) - to be noticeable because it is different from everything else. *My memory of the event is hazy but one moment stands out - the evening fireworks by the pier.*

**Pragmatic** (adj) - concerned with practical matters rather than theory. *Seth's pragmatic approach to problem-solving has saved us many hours of brainstorming.*

**Have something to do with** - connected to something. Her interest in finance has little to do with materialism - she is not interested in money itself but rather how it works and affects the society.

**Catch on** (phr v) - to become popular or fashionable. *Touchscreen technologies hadn't really caught on until the first iPhone model got released.*

**Continuity** (n) - (here) something that keeps being done in the same manner it did in the past. *There has to be some continuity in client relations - we don't want to treat them differently depending on which manager deals with them.*

**Make for** - create something or help something take place, facilitate something. *TV-series usually make for a nice conversation topic.*

**Extended family** - family members beyond the nuclear family, which includes parents, children, and siblings. Extended family may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and in-laws.

**Nurture** (v) - to support, to help something stay and keep growing.

**Fall victim to something** - to suffer from something or to be fooled by something/somebody (literally or figuratively). *Many men fell victim to her attractive looks.*

**Battle** (against) something - to fight or resist something. *After battling lung cancer for three years he miraculously managed to beat it.*

**Seamlessly** (adv) - in a smooth, natural manner. *His speech seamlessly transitioned from family to politics and then back to family values.*

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**Inclusivity** (n) - practice of including things, topics or people that would normally be not a part of it (i.e. a group).

*Inclusivity in the movies helped many black American actors to truly shine.*

**Social cohesion** - connection within a community.

**To bridge cultural gaps** - to make cultural differences less noticeable or to overcome them. *Bridging cultural gaps is one of the steps of peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies.*

**Designated** - made or chosen for a certain purpose. *There is a designated trash disposal area in every district of the city.*

**Skew** (v) - incorrect due to being affected by some external factor.