

IELTS Speaking Topic – Studying #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 teacher who has had a significant impact on your life

You should say:

- what was the teacher like
- what subject they taught
- how they had an impact on you

and say if you are still in touch with the teacher

Model answer

The teacher that has definitely **shaped and formed** my career is Mrs Blackpool, who taught us Physics and Math at school. She was highly-qualified as a professional and a patient, understanding person. These qualities made her one of the most pleasant people to interact with.

One memory in particular **stands out**. A student in our class was really struggling with even most basic calculations, **lagging behind** and **dragging the rest of the class down** with him. Mrs Blackpool found a real-life example the student could **relate to** and within minutes he **got the hang of** the calculation. The genius of the teacher was in understanding that the student in question had difficulties with abstract thinking. Realising this, she gave him something more **tangible** to work with.

Unfortunately she passed away last year. Prior to that we would often visit her to keep her company. Even though she lived **well into** her nineties she remained as bright as ever, her mind stayed sharp and **inquisitive**.

IELTS Speaking Part 3

Ways of studying

What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad?

One clear disadvantage that has to be mentioned **right off the bat** is the price. Studying abroad is **prohibitively expensive** for several reasons - costs of accommodation, **tuition** as well as all the associated moving expenses. With that in mind, education provided abroad has a number of advantages to offer. One less obvious one is that the student gets to experience life on their own with no **overprotective** parents around. Such exposure to life is as good of a lesson as the classes the student will be having.

Secondly, studying in another country is a unique chance to **get a different angle on** academic things. No matter how good your teachers are, they will have their own approach to science, and this is going to be greatly influenced by where they are from. All in all, the advantages are obvious so if money is **no issue** then one should definitely go for it.

Is it likely that online courses might replace traditional classroom learning in the future?

This scenario is very **plausible**. In fact, it is already the case with some spheres. Websites like Codecademy have been providing coding courses to total beginners since 2012. The ambitious idea of the website is to shape an

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individual with no relevant coding skills into an **employable professional** - all through online learning. I guess at the end of the day it makes sense to study a computer-related field using your computer. But what about other spheres? I believe that while online courses can **complement** the conventional studying, they cannot fully **substitute** it. Most professions still require **hands-on experience**, especially those where mistakes can lead to serious consequences. So the answer is simply - it is possible, but not probable.

Would you say that homeschooling is a good alternative to traditional classes?

It is definitely a **viable** alternative. However, it has its limitations. I believe that one of the **core** purposes of school is to integrate the child into society. Learning skills like interacting with their **peers**, conflict management, making friends are all integral to a **well-adjusted** individual. This is where homeschooling **falls short** as by definition a homeschooled child has no other kids in their environment. It does have its merits though. Tutors make homeschooling curriculum tailored to fit the student, his **learning aptitude** and interests. This is very **conducive to** efficient education process.

Studying and skills

Are exams an accurate reflection of a student's knowledge and skills? If not, how can they be made more accurate?

I'd say that **lumping all exams together** is a very bad generalisation that **does no justice to** most exams. A well-designed test system checks how well-informed you are on the subject and how effectively you can apply the knowledge you have. In some schools we can see situations where the teachers would focus on the questions in the exam rather than the subject itself. This stems from the fact that the school is assessed on the exam performance of its students. Therefore a well-designed exam should cover a scope of tasks and questions wide enough to **warrant comprehensive** knowledge of the subject.

Does learning a second language have practical benefits in today's globalized world?

A good point to start is that the only realistic excuse not to learn a second language is if you are an English native speaker. The **rationale behind this** is fairly simple - it is the **lingua franca**, it has been for many decades now. And even if that is the case, there is at least one aspect you should consider. There are benefits even outside purely practical reasons. It is a well-established fact that learning and using a foreign language makes one's mind much sharper and more resistant to age-related mental conditions. Finally, when you know a language other than your own you simply feel better about yourself. It gives you a nice sense of achievement and a confidence boost.

What do you think are the key elements of a successful learning environment?

One key aspect of an environment conducive to learning is class composition based on **merit** and ability. Students of equal talent and **learning aptitude** make for a much more efficient learning experience. This is true for both the teacher and the students. When there is no lagging behind nor getting bored the education process stays dynamic and **keeps students on their toes**. Another important factor is up-to-date textbooks and **supplementary** materials. These ensure that relevant data is used in the classes. This can be a problem with some schools that keep using books from last decade, where some of the information might have already become useless or even **misleading**.

Studying vocabulary

Lag behind - to be to slow either literally (for example when running) or figuratively (when learning something new in a group). Charlie kept lagging behind in his Math class until parents decided to get a private tutor for him.

Drag somebody down - to affect somebody else negatively. Ben's poor performance at work drags everyone in the

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sales department down so their overall productivity is much lower because of him.

Get the hang of something - to learn or understand how to do something through practice. *Don't worry if it looks too difficult now - once you have done that yourself a couple of time you will get the hang of it quickly.*

Inquisitive (adj) - eager to learn more, usually by asking questions (inquiring). *Inquisitive students tend to stay after classes to get a chance of asking a question to the professor.*

Tuition (n) - education. Usually used in relation to tuition fees - the payment for receiving education.

Overprotective (adj) - too worried about something to the point of not giving them enough freedom or independence. *His overprotective mother wouldn't let Barry hang out with other kids fearing that they would be bad influence on him.*

Employable professional - one who has enough knowledge, experience and qualifications to get a job.

Hands-on experience - experience in a pragmatic way, i.e. of doing something yourself rather than seeing somebody else do it or reading about it. *The hands-on experience you will get through this internship programme is going to be invaluable in your further career*

Peers (n) - people of the same age you are. *Peers tend to have more in common in term of interests so they are more likely to be friends, as opposed to people of different age groups.*

Well-adjusted (adj) - someone who is able to cope and adapt in various situations, and maintain positive mental health and emotional stability. *They are self-aware and have a good understanding of their emotions and thoughts.*

Learning aptitude - how easy it is for one to learn something new. *Different students based on their level of learning aptitude can find the same subject to be either quite easy or extremely challenging.*

Conducive (adj) - making it easy, more efficient or comfortable to do something. *Quiet, well-lit rooms are conducive to studying.*

Comprehensive (adj) - complete, trying to cover all of the topic in question. *A comprehensive list of notable authors of the 19th century.*

Merit (n) - ability and achievement in a particular career. *His merit in this field is unquestionable and people recognise him as one of the most prominent scientists of today.*

Keep somebody on their toes - to have somebody busy with something challenging and difficult to achieve in order to keep them from getting bored or idle.

General vocabulary

Shape and form - to influence somebody in such a way that it changes it (or them). *Hemingway's books shaped and formed my attitude to language. Now I firmly believe that one's language should be concise and efficient.*

Stand out - to be remarkable because it is different from everything (or everyone) else. *One particular pupil that stood out was Stanley because he was the only one always eager to answer teacher's questions.*

Relate to something or somebody - to understand it because you've had a similar situation or experience. *I really can't relate to Marta's problems with exams because I've always been very diligent when it came to preparations.*

Tangible (adj) - (here) something that you can touch, something concrete, physical rather than abstract.

Well into - (here, about a number) considerably more than. *His inheritance money is well into hundreds thousands of dollars.*

Right off the bat - (informal) right away, at once. *When the new boss was officially appointed he fired two people right off the bat. He had known them for a while and strongly believed that they were a liability to the company.*

Prohibitively expensive - something that costs so much that hardly anyone can afford it. *Real estate has been prohibitively expensive for over a decade now.*

Get a different angle on something - to look at something from a different perspective, consider something in a

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different way. *Having spent two years in an impoverished country I got a different angle on how they could be helped.*

No issue - if something is no issue, it is not difficult to have or get it. *Talented professionals have never been an issue in this company, fortunately.*

Plausible (adj) - possible, likely. *One plausible explanation of his absence is that he is stuck in traffic and his cellphone has died.*

Complement (v) - to complete something or be a good addition to it. *White wine usually complements dishes made of fish nicely.*

Substitute (v) - to replace. *If you fire Ed there are no people with enough experience in his field to substitute him, therefore I would advise you against doing that.*

Viable (adj) - possible, likely or fitting. *A viable solution to the crisis is to ask the government to give most businesses a tax break.*

Core (adj) - main, fundamental.

Fall short - if somebody or something falls short of something, they fail to achieve that. *I am afraid to say that your school falls short of the bold claims you have made on your website.*

Lump together - to group something or somebody despite their difference in nature or quality. Usually used negatively. *Lumping all students together in one huge class is going to lower their performance considerably.*

Do no justice to - fail to highlight how good something or somebody is.

Warrant (v) - to make something necessary, needed or required. *Expelling the student can't be warranted by two missed classes.*

Rationale behind something - reasoning or explanation of something. *The rationale behind new education program was that the old one failed to address the needs of foreign students.*

Supplementary (adj) - additional. *Students should buy all the supplementary materials themselves because the university does not provide them.*

Misleading (adj) - giving wrong or confusing information. *Footnotes and commentaries in this book are misleading rather than useful.*