

IELTS Listening

This part contains strategies for the Listening part of IELTS, structure and tips.

Listening is the first part of IELTS exam. It lasts for **30 minutes** and consists of four sections with 10 questions each. Each section is different in its topic, the number of speakers, and the overall difficulty. This page will walk you through the basics of IELTS Listening, various types of tasks and provide tips on how to improve your score.

If you are familiar with the structure, start practicing with [IELTS Listening sample tests](#).

IELTS Listening Structure

Section 1 is a conversation between two people who make an arrangement. It can be something like a travel agency phone conversation, a talk between a shop assistant and a customer, a chat between a landlord and a tenant, and so on. This part tests your ability to catch and understand factual information.

Section 2 is a monologue. A person is giving a talk that can be about an activity, event, or arrangement. As there is only one person speaking, you won't have to adapt to several accents or paces. Again, the test-taker's skill to comprehend factual information is tested.

Section 3 is a talk between several speakers on an academic-related topic, such as preparing a term-paper, presentation, diploma etc. You will listen to these people discussing the issue and sharing their opinions on the matter. This section tests your ability to distinguish relevant information and understand the speaker's attitude about the issues discussed.

Section 4 is usually a lecture-type narrative by one person. It is an academic, term-packed speech on a topic that tests your ability to understand scientific terms and guess the meaning of those you possibly do not understand. The most difficult of the four, this section gauges your ability to understand the focus of the speech, the speaker's opinion on the ideas presented as well as factual information.

IELTS Listening Basics

Listening sections 1, 2 and 3 are divided into two parts, meaning that you will be answering 5 or 6 questions before the recording is paused. In Section 4 you will have to go through all ten questions without a pause.

An important change in IELTS Listening 2021 is that you no longer listen to the beginning of Section 1 two times. Starting from January 2021, the recording is played only once.

Between each group of questions, you are given 10 to 30 seconds to look at the questions. Use this time to underline keywords in questions.

Answers to the questions in listening come one after another, meaning that the first question will have its answer at the beginning of the recording, the answer to question two will come after it, and so on. Follow this pattern to avoid unnecessary search.

Each answer gives you 1 point, for a total of 40 points. Below is the score table for IELTS Listening:

Band	9.0	8.5	8.0	7.5	7.0	6.5	6.0	5.5	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0
Score	39-40	37-38	35-36	32-34	30-31	26-29	23-25	18-22	16-17	13-15	10-12	8-9	6-7

IELTS Listening Tips

- At times, the speaker can hint at the right answer by using a slightly different intonation. Although it may be misleading, it is still advised to put the answer down for further use should you not hear a more apt answer to the question. See an example below:

Write **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.

Studying at the Open University demanded a great deal of **27**

Note how the speaker pronounces the last word differently. It clearly stands out from the rest of what she said. Although this doesn't happen all the time, knowing this little secret might help you score some extra answers.

- It is very common for speakers to correct themselves. This presents an additional challenge to the test-takers, as you are usually given two or even three pieces of information, all of which fit the answer requirement. You can use the context or speaker's intonation to understand which answer is the right one. Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** for each answer.

Total estimated value: **8 £** ...

Note how the speaker gives three different numbers. The last number is the answer, which is hinted at by their intonation.

- If you fail to catch the exact answer or miss it completely, it is a good idea to try and make an educated guess. That means crossing out the less likely options to focus on the more likely ones. After that use your judgement. Remember, no answer given is a guaranteed loss of a score point, whereas guessing always has a chance of succeeding. In IELTS, you do not get any additional penalty for giving the wrong answer.
- Before transferring the answer to your exam sheet, double-check your spelling. Don't forget about capitalisation
- Because IELTS Listening is going to be the first part of the exam for you, it might take your brain some time to adapt itself to the task, meaning that it won't be 100% effective at the beginning. Expose yourself to some spoken English before the exam; watch a video in English or listen to a podcast to prepare yourself for what is ahead.
- When practicing, if you find it difficult to make out what the speakers say, consider consulting the script for unknown words. This only refers to your practice listening, as you won't have the tapescript during the actual exam, naturally. If the problem persists, practice more. Expose yourself to more recorded English speech.
- Do not hesitate to write on your exam paper, make marks, underline words, or do anything else that can potentially help you achieve a better score. You will have to transfer the answer to a separate answer form, so your markings on the test paper won't affect your score.

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IELTS Listening questions types

All of the following examples are taken from the IELTS official web page.

1. *Matching information* from the recording with data in your question paper and then choosing the right letter in the answer sheet. In this example, you may use any letter more than once. If this is the case, it says so in the task:

What does Jack tell his tutor about each of the following course options?

- A He'll definitely do it.
- B He may or may not do it.
- C He won't do it.

Write the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C** next to questions 21- 25.

You may choose any letter more than once.

- 21 Media Studies
- 22 Women and Power
- 23 Culture and Society
- 24 Identity and Popular Culture
- 25 Introduction to Cultural Theory

2. *Multiple choice* can be either choosing one of three correct answers or completing the sentence with one of three given endings. Sometimes the list of answers is longer, and you have to pick more than one of them. Listen and read the instructions carefully.

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**.

9 Type of insurance chosen

- A Economy
- B Standard
- C Premium

10 Customer wants goods delivered to

- A port
- B home
- C depot

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3. Short-answer *questions* require you to respond to factual questions regarding the recording. You have to write the answer with the word limit rules similar to the previous question type.

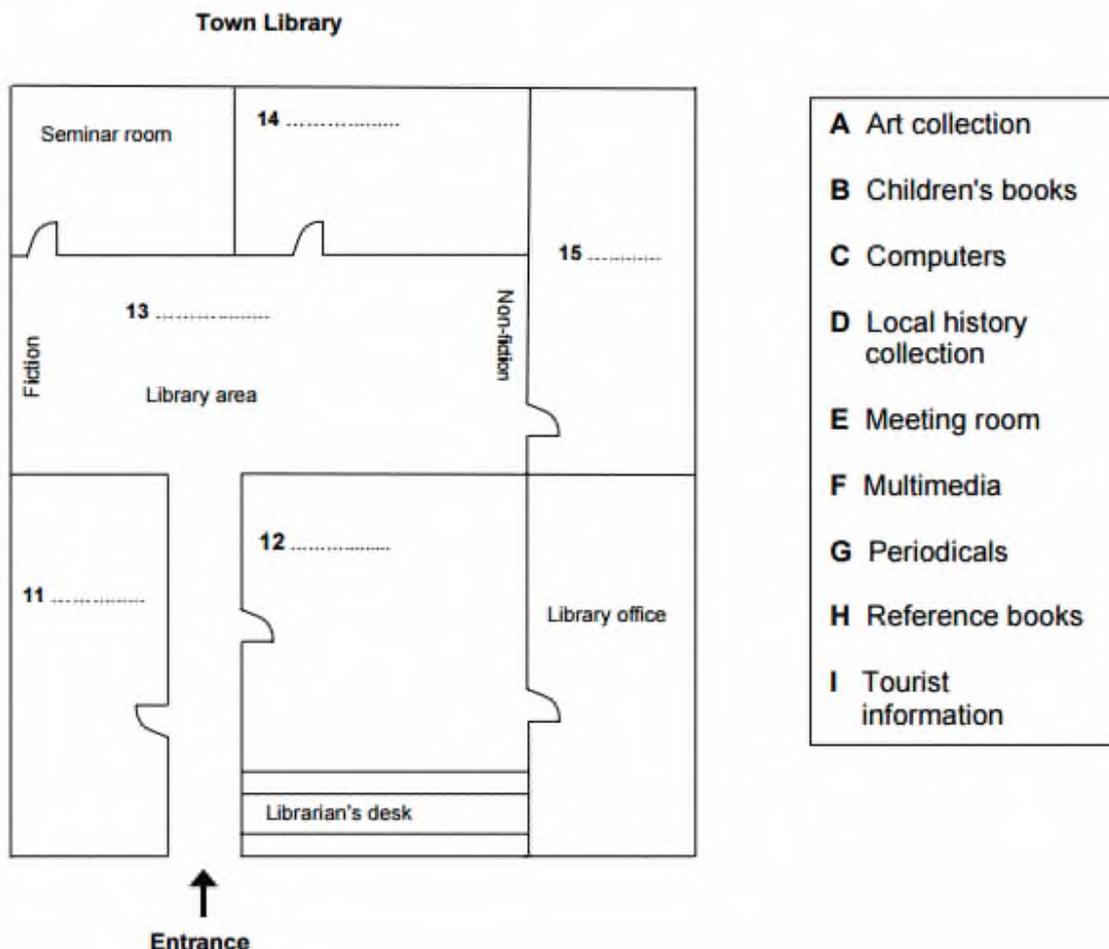
Write **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER** for each answer.

What **TWO** factors can make social contact in a foreign country difficult?

- 11
- 12

4. *Plan/map/diagram completion* involves diagram label completion. This diagram is based on the information provided in the text. It can be an illustration of a mechanism, a process, a building and so on. You have to write the words in the gaps that the diagram has. Each gap has a number for your convenience. The word limit requirement is similar to the previous tasks:

Choose **FIVE** answers from the box and write the correct letters **A-I** next to questions 11-15.



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5. *Table/flowchart/form completion* involves filling the gaps in these documents. The order of information in the document and the recording is the same.

Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

PACKHAM'S SHIPPING AGENCY – customer quotation form	
<i>Example</i>	
Country of destination:	Kenya
Name:	Jacob 1
Address to be collected from:	2 College, Downlands Rd
Town:	Bristol
Postcode:	3

6. *Sentence completion* is a task that has a sentence with a gap in it. You have to fill the gap by choosing a word (or words) from the recording. The task states the word limit. Usually it's up to three words and/or a number, meaning that you can use up to three words plus a digit. It doesn't mean that your answer has to be no shorter than three words; the answer can be one word only. It means that you shouldn't exceed the word limit provided. Articles and prepositions are counted as words too. Hyphenated words (Afro-American, good-looking) are counted as one.

Write NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS for each answer.

Studying with the Open University demanded a great deal of **27**

Studying and working at the same time improved Rachel's **28**
skills.