

# IELTS

# Teaching tips



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## What is IELTS?

IELTS, which is jointly owned by the British Council; IDP IELTS; and Cambridge University Press & Assessment, has played a key role in language testing for study, work and immigration purposes for over 30 years. IELTS is accepted by more than 11,000 organisations around the world, including universities and employers in many countries, as well as by professional bodies, and other government agencies.

It is also used for language testing for UK immigration and for migration to other countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Millions of IELTS tests are taken each year in over 140 countries.

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## 'Getting to know you' survey

**Aims:** To help students get to know each other; to practise speaking and use as a lead into Writing Task 1.

- As a class, brainstorm some things that students would like to know about each other. For example, age, nationality, IELTS band required, hours spent studying each week, favourite sport, languages spoken, hobbies.
- Each student selects five or six items and turns them into questions. As a class, check that students have formed correct questions.
- Then students survey their classmates. If it is a big class, in the interest of time, ask students to talk to a specific number of students.
- Once students have got all the information, they have to display it in a graph or bar chart.
- These graphs or charts can then be used to practise Writing Task 1, either in class or as homework.

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## Getting to know IELTS

**Aim:** For students to familiarise themselves thoroughly with the format of each section of IELTS.

**This activity is ideal for the beginning of an IELTS course.**

- Ask students to work in groups. Assign one IELTS section to each group.
- The task is to write a series of questions about the format of the section for other students to answer. To help them with the test format, students can go to: **IELTS.org/TestFormat**
- Questions can be true/false, multiple choice or short answer.
- For example, for the Listening section:
  1. How long is the Listening test?
  2. How many recordings are there?
  3. There are 50 questions in total in the test. **True** or **False**?
  4. How long do test takers have to transfer their answers to the answer sheet?
    - a) 30 minutes
    - b) 10 minutes
    - c) 40 minutes
- Students then exchange questions and work through them.

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## Conjunction race

**Aim:** To raise awareness and practise the use of conjunctions in sentences.

**Preparation:** Prepare ten sentences that contain a conjunction. These can be taken from practice IELTS Reading passages.

### In class:

- Ask students to work in groups of three. Each group should have some paper or a mini-whiteboard.
- The teacher displays two clauses, joined by a conjunction (which is blanked out) on the board.
- The groups race to write a conjunction that completes the sentence and either hold it up for the teacher to see or, if on paper, run and stick it on the board.
- Points are awarded according to the order in which the groups finish (3 points for first place, 2 for second and 1 for third).
- However, students must explain and justify their choice of conjunction in order to get the points (there may be a few conjunctions that can complete the sentence and it is important that students are aware of the meaning conveyed by their choice).
- Extra support can be provided for this activity by giving students a choice of conjunctions to complete each sentence.

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## Question Pelmanism 1

**Aim:** For students to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the different question types in the Listening and Reading tests and think of tips for answering them.

- Ask students to work in groups of three or four.
- Assign a different skills section to each group (i.e. Reading or Listening).
- Ask each group to create the following table.

| Question type | Example | Top tips! |
|---------------|---------|-----------|
|               |         |           |
|               |         |           |
|               |         |           |

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## Question Pelmanism 1 (continued)

- Ask students to write the name of each question type for their skill in the table. Refer them to: **IELTS.org/TestFormat**
- Then give each group a practice paper and ask them to find examples of each question type and record it in the table.
- Ask them to write some tips for each question type in the table (again, refer them to: **IELTS.org/TestFormat**)
- The teacher should have pre-prepared columns 1 and 3 to easily check what the students have and can collect in each group's work to check they have appropriate examples.
- At the completion of the activity, each student will have an instant reference guide to the test they were given.

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## Punctuation practice

**Aim:** For students to practise punctuation as part of a Writing task.

**Preparation:** Pre-prepare a Writing script (one or two) by removing all the punctuation from it.

### **In class:**

- Give students the sample script and ask them to read it.
- Once they have finished, ask them what they notice. Hopefully they will say, “The punctuation is missing!”
- Have a discussion about the importance of punctuation as part of writing.
- Then ask students, in pairs, to punctuate the script.
- The teacher can support lower level students by telling them the number of capital letters, commas, full stops, apostrophes, etc., there are in the script. For higher level students this may not be necessary.
- Finally, give or show the original script to the students for them to check their answers.
- Have a class discussion about the punctuation in the script: why it is necessary, what it contributes to the writing, etc.



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## Listening – what did I miss?

**Aim:** To help students self-evaluate which areas to work on in the Listening test based on their performance.

- Following a practice Listening test, provide students with the answers and a listening evaluation form (example below).
- When checking/correcting their answers, students must also complete the form which focuses them on the underlying reason for each error. For example:

|                  |                                | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|---|---|---|---|
| Topic            |                                | Environment |   |   |   |   |
| Reason for error | Incorrect spelling             | IIII        |   |   |   |   |
|                  | Didn't know the word           |             |   |   |   |   |
|                  | Misheard the word              | I           |   |   |   |   |
|                  | Missed the word entirely       |             |   |   |   |   |
|                  | Lost my place                  |             |   |   |   |   |
|                  | Misunderstood question/keyword |             |   |   |   |   |

- This evaluation form is revisited each time students do a practice Listening test. It helps the students to identify, record and prioritise specific areas for attention.
- In the example above, the student would benefit from focusing on environment-related vocabulary, particularly in terms of spelling.

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## Speed reading

**Aim:** To help students with skimming and scanning for the Reading test.

### Preparation:

- Choose a practice IELTS Reading test and make enough copies for students to share in pairs.
- Cut the test into paragraphs, and on the back, label the paragraphs 1, 2, 3, etc., in order of the text.
- Prepare questions about the text to read out to the class or display on the board.

### In class:

- Give each pair of students one cut-up practice Reading test.
- They should spread the paragraphs out face down on the table in front of them so that they can see the numbers.
- Each pair of students should have a piece of paper on which to write answers.
- The teacher displays a question about paragraph 1 on the board or reads it out.
- The students then have a time limit to read the paragraph and write the answer. The time limit is whatever the teacher thinks is appropriate but not too short or too long.
- After each question, the students should give the relevant paragraph to the teacher so that the students do not refer to it again.
- At the end, go through the answers asking students to share *how* they found the answers, and what methods they used.
- From this discussion create a 'Top tips for skimming and scanning' sheet that the students can refer to throughout the course.

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## Question Pelmanism 2

**Aim:** For students to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the different question types in the Listening and Reading tests and tips for answering them.

**Preparation:** This activity is a follow-on from Question Pelmanism 1 and ideally done one or two lessons after the students have completed the initial table of question types.

Pelmanism is a matching card activity. The teacher will have to pre-prepare 30 pieces of paper/card for each group.

### **In class:**

- Ask students to work in the same groups as they did for Question Pelmanism 1.
- Give each group a set of cards, 10–15 maximum. On each card, students have to write a question type, an example of the question type or a top tip.

See over page for example.

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## Question Pelmanism 2 (continued)

**Short answer questions**

**Completes the  
sentences below**

**Write answers using  
words from the text**

- Once this is complete, the cards should be mixed up and placed face down.
- Then each student takes a turn to pick up three cards – if they match, as in the example above, then they keep the set. If they do not match, the cards must be replaced and another student has a turn.
- The students with the most cards at the end is the winner!

There are many variations to this activity. To find out more watch ([IELTS.org/teachers](https://www.youtube.com/IELTSofficial) and [youtube.com/IELTSofficial](https://www.youtube.com/IELTSofficial))

## IELTS Morgan Terry Memorial IATEFL Scholarship

This scholarship, funded by the IELTS Partners (British Council; IDP IELTS; and Cambridge University Press & Assessment), is in memory of Morgan Terry, a dear colleague who made significant contributions to the work of IELTS until her untimely death in 2011.

### The award consists of:

- registration for the TEA SIG's pre-IATEFL conference event
- registration for IATEFL
- a year's IATEFL membership
- a maximum of five nights' accommodation
- travel costs including, if necessary, an economy flight to the UK and expenses.

To find out more, including how to apply, go to: [IELTS.org/MorganTerryScholarship](https://www.ielts.org/MorganTerryScholarship)

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