

**IELTS**<sup>™</sup>  
Life Skills



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**Life Skills**

Guide for teachers

[www.ielts.org/uk/lifeskills](http://www.ielts.org/uk/lifeskills)

# Who is the test for?

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IELTS Life Skills is specifically designed for people who are required by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to demonstrate their speaking and listening ability as part of an application. It can be used by people applying for:

- **'Family of a settled person' visas**  
If they want to remain with a relative, spouse or partner already living in the UK permanently.
- **Indefinite leave to remain**  
If they are already living in the UK and want to make it their permanent home.
- **Citizenship**  
If they want to become a British citizen.

For all other visa categories the IELTS test can be used.

To find out more about how you can use IELTS or IELTS Life Skills for UK visas and immigration, go to [www.ielts.org/uk](http://www.ielts.org/uk)

## Test format

IELTS Life Skills is available at two levels:

- **A1 Speaking and Listening**  
For 'family of a settled person' visas
- **B1 Speaking and Listening**  
For indefinite leave to remain and citizenship



# Tips for teachers

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## General

Make sure that your students:

- Are familiar with the format and types of tasks in the different sections of the IELTS Life Skills tests at each level (see information below)
- Are aware of the timings of the different parts (see the sample papers at [www.ielts.org/uk/lifeskills](http://www.ielts.org/uk/lifeskills))
- Know that they can make notes during the test (these are not marked by the examiners)
- Have plenty of practice in speaking to a partner (as the test is taken in pairs), on everyday topics such as those mentioned in the list on the next page
- Are aware that the test will be recorded, and don't let it make them nervous
- Don't worry if the examiner interrupts them, as each test has to be standardized in terms of timing



**IELTS Life Skills  
is the only test  
available outside  
the UK that satisfies  
the UK requirements  
for citizenship**

## Speaking and Listening

Make sure that your students:

- Listen carefully to the examiner's questions and instructions, and answer as fully and clearly as possible
- Can say their nationality and where they come from
- Can spell their name correctly
- Use the preparation time in Phase 1b\* wisely:
  - At A1 level, they could write down some question words (e.g. who, what, where, how etc) and then try to think of appropriate questions to ask on the topic they are given
  - At B1 level, they could try to write down 3 things they want to mention in their talk
- Ask the examiner for clarification if they don't understand something
- Practice making a note of the questions before listening to a recorded text. It is not a dictation and the examiner will speak at normal pace, so students should write down key words only
- When the listening recordings are played for the second time, listen to the recorded text that the examiner tells them to (the first one or the second one).

### A1 Level only

Make sure your students:

- Don't give over-long answers to their partner's questions in Phase 1b\*

### B1 Level only

Make sure your students:

- Listen to what their partner says in their long turn (Phase 1b\*\*) and make notes if they like, so they are ready to ask three questions at the end

\*A1 Level Phase 1b: The test takers ask each other, in turn for up to two minutes, simple questions on a familiar topic. One and a half minutes' preparation time is given.

\*\*B1 Level Phase 1b: The test takers talk in turn for one and a half minutes on a familiar topic. Each test taker then answers three questions prepared by their partner. One minute preparation time is given.

# Useful information

IELTS Life Skills Speaking and Listening Tests are available at two levels, A1 and B1.

There are two main parts to IELTS Life Skills. In the first part, test takers are expected to ask and answer questions on familiar topics.

The second part is a combined listening and speaking task, and test takers listen to a task played on a CD and answer three spoken questions which test both general and detailed listening. Test takers can make notes while listening if they want to.

The tasks in IELTS Life Skills are designed to reflect the everyday experience of communicating in an English-speaking country. Test takers will be expected to take part in short discussions on everyday subjects including:

- personal details/experiences
- family and friends
- buying goods
- work
- health
- leisure
- education/training
- transport
- housing
- weather

## A1

At A1 level, the examiner asks the test takers questions to elicit personal information and then the test takers ask each other questions on everyday topics such as food, friends or the weather.

In the second part of the test there is a discussion on a theme related to the topic of the listening texts.

The A1 test lasts between 16 and 18 minutes.

## B1

At B1 level, the examiner asks the test takers introductory questions to elicit personal information and then the test takers ask each other questions and talk together on a given familiar topic such as previous studies or learning. Each test taker then talks for a minute and a half on a familiar topic such as a famous person they admire or their future hopes and plans, and answers three follow-up questions prepared by their partner.

In the second part of the test there is a task where test takers plan an activity together on the topic of the listening texts, such as deciding which job would be suitable for a friend to do, followed by a discussion on a related topic.

The B1 test lasts 22 minutes.

# Assessment criteria

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IELTS Life Skills tests how well a test taker can communicate with other people in everyday English. The assessment criteria focus on a test taker's ability to perform communicative functions such as obtaining (understanding) and conveying information, speaking to communicate a message and ideas, and engaging in discussion. Test takers who meet the assessment criteria for the Life Skills A1 or B1 Speaking and Listening test are awarded a 'Pass'.

## A1

At A1 level, test takers have a basic but limited command of the spoken language and are able to communicate in simple exchanges and everyday contexts.

Assessment is based on the following criteria.

### 1. The test taker will be able to obtain (understand) information from simple verbal communication.

The test taker can:

- Follow the gist of simple verbal communication
- Obtain necessary information from simple verbal communication
- Follow single step verbal instructions correctly

### 2. The test taker will be able to convey information.

The test taker can:

- Provide a short verbal account
- Convey relevant detail during simple verbal communication

### 3. The test taker will be able to speak English to communicate.

The test taker can:

- Use pronunciation to convey intended meaning
- Use simple language appropriate for context when speaking

### 4. The test taker will be able to engage in discussion with others.

The test taker can:

- Make relevant contributions to discussion
- Express simple views clearly during verbal communication
- Make effective verbal requests to obtain information

Functions may include (among others):

- describing
- giving opinions
- giving personal information
- stating (dis)likes and preferences
- commenting
- asking for information or description
- (dis)agreeing
- explaining/giving reasons/justifying
- exchanging opinions
- deciding
- suggesting
- selecting.

## B1

At B1 level, test takers have a limited but effective command of the spoken language and are able to handle communication in most familiar situations. Assessment is based on the following criteria.

### 1. The test taker will be able to obtain (understand) information from verbal communication.

The test taker can:

- Follow the gist of straightforward verbal communication
- Obtain relevant detail from straightforward verbal communication
- Follow straightforward verbal instructions correctly

### 2. The test taker will be able to convey information.

The test taker can:

- Present information using an appropriate discourse structure
- Provide a verbal account of relevant information
- Convey relevant detail during verbal communication

# Assessment criteria

## Continued

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### **3. The test taker will be able to speak English to communicate.**

The test taker can:

- Use clear pronunciation to convey intended meaning
- Use appropriate language in context according to formality

### **4. The test taker will be able to engage in discussion with others.**

The test taker can:

- Contribute constructively to discussion on straightforward topics
- Express views constructively during verbal communication on straightforward topics
- Plan action with others for a given task
- Obtain relevant information from others

In addition to those at A1 level, functions may include (among others):

- showing contrast/cause/reason/purpose
- comparing
- prioritizing
- planning an action with others
- persuading
- narrating
- asking about past or future events
- expressing future certainty/possibility.

### **Approved test of speaking and listening for UK visas and immigration**

IELTS Life Skills is an English test for people who need to demonstrate speaking and listening skills at Levels A1 or B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The test is included on the UK Home Office's list of Secure English Language Tests (often referred to as SELT tests) and is available both in the UK and internationally.

IELTS Life Skills is offered by the three IELTS Test Partners – British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment.

Your students can register for their IELTS Life Skills test at [www.ielts.org/uk/findtest\\_ukvi](http://www.ielts.org/uk/findtest_ukvi)



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IELTS is jointly owned by the British Council,  
IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge English  
Language Assessment.

The IELTS test is designed and set by the world's  
leading experts in language assessment to give  
a true picture of a test taker's language skills.

IELTS Bands 4-9 (NQF levels Entry 3 to Level 3)  
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