



# Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success!

*10 steps to exam confidence*



Dear IELTS Exam Candidate

Getting an advanced grade in the IELTS exam is a tremendous achievement and is not something that comes without a great deal of effort.

And for many students, the Speaking exam is the most difficult to prepare for. What will the examiner be grading you on? Which aspects of speaking do you need to improve? How can you get the practice you need?

That's why I've written a free mini-course to help you organise your time and take practical steps to improve your English Speaking skills. This mini-course is for students aiming for an advanced grade (Band 7 or higher). It will help you:

- 1) know exactly what to expect in the IELTS Speaking exam
- 2) understand how you'll be assessed
- 3) identify areas that you need to work on before the Speaking exam
- 4) prepare effectively for the big day.

Improve your chances of passing the IELTS Speaking exam with top grades!

Try the tasks we suggest here and in the emails we send you and I'm sure your chances of passing the Speaking exam with the grade you're hoping for will improve significantly.

Best wishes

*Peter Travis*

IELTS Speaking

PS

Don't miss our emails with extra study material for each step!

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# Step 1

## Take up the Challenge

Take time to improve your Speaking skills

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### The IELTS Speaking website



To find out how the IELTS Speaking website can help you with your speaking skills visit us: [ieltsspeaking.co.uk](http://ieltsspeaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

If you're reading this the chances are you're facing the IELTS Speaking exam and want to make sure you're successful on the big day.

What can you do in the time available to increase your chances of passing with the highest possible grade? Well, three things are essential:

***Goal 1: Make sure you know what to expect in the exam so you can prepare effectively and avoid any nasty surprises on the big day.***

***Goal 2: Know your strengths in speaking English and the areas you need to improve.***

***Goal 3: Take every opportunity to develop your English!***

Speaking is often the one skill many students get the least amount of practice in. Why?

Let's imagine you're currently living in a non-English speaking country. Let's also imagine you're lucky enough to be attending a weekly one-hour Speaking lesson in a class of 12 students - that's 60 minutes.

Take off ten minutes for late arrivals, greetings and administration at the start and end of the lesson - that's 50 minutes left.

The teacher might talk for about 30% of the lesson including giving instructions, feedback etc. - that's 35 minutes left.

If you work in pairs for the entire lesson that's about 17 minutes speaking time for you each lesson. If you work in small groups of three for the entire lesson that's about 11 minutes speaking time for you! In a whole-class discussion for the entire lesson that means you have about 3 minutes speaking time!

The likelihood is you'll take part in a variety of speaking tasks so the figures will be somewhere in between. However, there'll also be lots of interruptions, questions and sometimes someone else who talks a lot ..... the times above are probably a little generous!

This is why your teacher will advise you to take EVERY opportunity to speak English, both in class AND in your own time.

And this mini-course will make exactly the same recommendations. To get the most from the time that remains until your exam day, you'll need to commit to practising your English speaking skills.

I'm pretty sure if you make this commitment and try the tasks I suggest in these 10 steps, your chances of passing the Speaking exam with the grade you're hoping for will improve significantly.

'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success' comes with 10 steps.

**Step 1:** Take up the challenge.

**Step 2:** Get to know the exam: be sure what will happen on the big day.

**Step 3:** Understand assessment: know what the examiner will be looking for.

**Step 4:** Know yourself: learn what you do well and what needs improving.

**Step 5:** Grow your vocabulary: raise your vocabulary to an advanced level.

**Step 6:** Polish your grammar: know how to showcase your use of English.

**Step 7:** Focus on fluency: learn the skills and strategies to speak fluently.

**Step 8:** Assess pronunciation: be confident you can speak clearly on the big day.

**Step 9:** Get speaking partners: you're not alone - find speaking partners online.

**Step 10:** Tips for the big day: some final advice for a successful exam.

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## Step 1

This task is an easy one to start with but very important nonetheless.

- 1) How much time can you put aside each week to prepare for the Speaking exam? List times in the week you can practice Speaking. Put them in your diary.
- 2) Do something to remind yourself of your commitment ... putting some stickers or messages around the apartment/house with 'Speak English' written on them will do for a start!
- 3) Check your inbox for our 'Step 1' email for links to the IELTS exercises on our website.

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# Step 2

## Get to Know the Exam

Be sure what will happen on the big day

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### IELTS Speaking Exam



Visit the IELTS Speaking website for a guide to the Speaking exam:  
[ielts speaking.co.uk](http://ielts speaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

Welcome to Step 2 of 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success'. Hopefully you're now surrounded by messages at home reminding you of your commitment to speaking English. (See yesterday's lesson if you have no idea what I'm talking about!)

Let's go back to yesterday and get a reminder of the first of the three goals we identified:

***Goal 1: Know what to expect in the exam so you can prepare effectively and avoid any nasty surprises on the big day.***

Knowing your Speaking exam 'inside out' will increase your confidence and enable you to prepare effectively. In today's task, you'll become totally familiar with the structure of your exam with our twelve-question quiz. (In Step 3 we'll look at assessment and what the examiner will be expecting from you.)

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## Step 2

- 1) Go to the IELTS exam board website and download the handbook for the exam.  
[http://www.ielts.org/test\\_takers\\_information.aspx](http://www.ielts.org/test_takers_information.aspx)
- 2) Have a look at the 'The Exam' section on the IELTS Speaking website.  
<http://www.ieltsspeaking.co.uk/about-ielts-speaking-2/>

Using these resources, answer the following questions:

# The IELTS Speaking Exam

- 1) How many sections are there in the Speaking exam?
- 2) Is the Speaking exam the same for the academic and general test?
- 3) Will you be recorded?
- 4) How long is each section of the exam?
- 5) What's the focus of each section? Answering questions? Making a short talk?
- 6) Are you interviewed alone or with a partner?
- 7) What kind of questions are you likely to be asked in the 'getting-to-know-you', introductory section?
- 8) What do you have to do in the long-turn?
- 9) Do you have time to prepare for your long turn and if so can you make notes?
- 10) Do you have to take part in a discussion with the examiner?
- 11) Can you ask the examiner to explain the meaning of a word?
- 12) Will the examiner give you an idea of your grade at the end of the test?

\* See the Step 2 email for answers to these and other questions about the Speaking exam.

# Step 3

## Understand Assessment

Know what the examiner will be looking for

### IELTS Speaking Recordings



Listen to our feedback on other advanced English students taking part in IELTS-style speaking tasks.

See the 'IELTS Language Lab' on the IELTS Speaking website:  
[ieltspeaking.co.uk](http://ieltspeaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

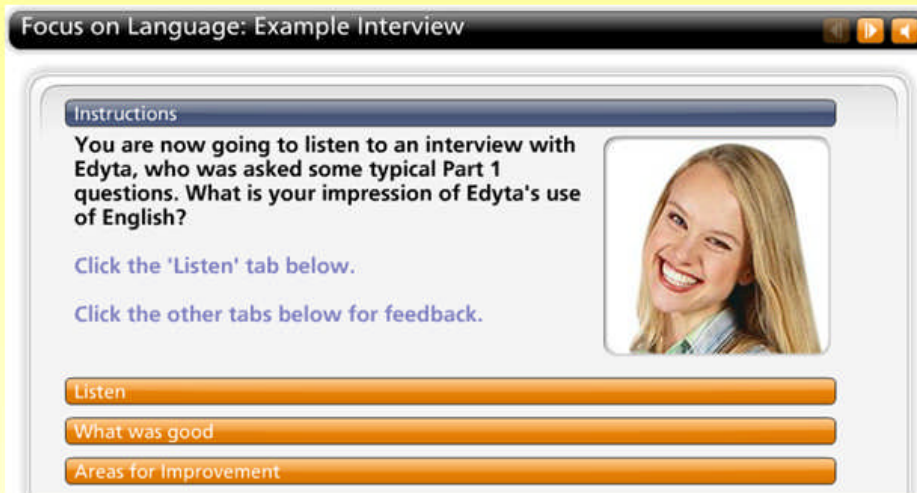
Welcome to Step 3 of 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success'. Hopefully you now have a clear idea about what you have to do in your Speaking exam. Today we'll look at how you'll be assessed.

If you've had the chance to look at the handbook for the exam you'll know that each section of the Speaking Paper has a particular focus. For example, during the opening 'getting-to-know-you' phase the focus is usually on how well you use language for social purposes, such as making introductions and answering questions. In the long turn section the focus will be on skills such as being able to speak at length clearly, using language to state an opinion, being able to describe, compare and contrast etc. In the discussion stage you'll need to show you're able to keep a discussion going, give opinions, agree and disagree, develop comments made by the examiner and generate new ideas.

How well you do in these tasks will depend on your proficiency in English and your general communication skills. The examiner will use the following criteria to grade you:

Grammatical range and accuracy  
Fluency and coherence  
Lexical resource  
Pronunciation

## Get practical help with assessment



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Focus on Language: Example Interview". Inside the window, there is a section titled "Instructions" with the following text: "You are now going to listen to an interview with Edyta, who was asked some typical Part 1 questions. What is your impression of Edyta's use of English?" Below this, there are two lines of blue text: "Click the 'Listen' tab below." and "Click the other tabs below for feedback." To the right of the text is a small portrait of a smiling woman with blonde hair. At the bottom of the window, there are three orange buttons: "Listen", "What was good", and "Areas for Improvement".

**Learn from other advanced IELTS students and from our feedback based on the IELTS assessment criteria.**

## **IELTS Speaking: *Advanced***

<http://www.ieltspeaking.co.uk/ielts-speaking-course/>

It's important that you understand what all these criteria mean so that you have a clear idea of how you'll be assessed - which brings us to the Step 3 task.

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### **Step 3**

For a general idea of what these criteria refer to try our quiz on the exam assessment on the next page.



## Assessment Criteria Quiz

1. Complete the gaps in each section using the words in the Word Bank. (Answers on Page 31):

### Speaking Assessment: Grammatical Range and Accuracy

- A) Grammatical range and accuracy refers to how well you are able to use a wide ..... of grammatical structures when expressing yourself.
- B) It also describes how ..... your use of English is.
- C) The language you use also has to be ..... to the tasks you are asked to do.

**Word Bank: accurate, appropriate, range**

### Speaking Assessment: Fluency and Coherence

- A) This criteria describes how well you are able to express thoughts and ideas ..... , linking your statements logically during monologues or dialogues.
- B) The things you say should be expressed with a level of ..... appropriate for an advanced level.
- C) This criteria also describes the ..... of your statements, which means you say enough, but not too little or too much when appropriate.

**Word Bank: fluency, length, clearly**

### **Speaking Assessment: Lexical Resource**

- A) This criteria relates to the ..... of vocabulary you can use.
- B) It also describes how ..... or precise you can be when describing meanings and expressing attitudes.
- C) You will be assessed on how well you can deal with unknown vocabulary by ....., that is using other words to express yourself.

**Word Bank: exact, paraphrasing, range**

### **Speaking Assessment: Pronunciation**

- A) Pronunciation describes how comprehensible your spoken English is to the listener. You will be assessed on things such as ....., which means how well you pronounce strong and weak syllables within individual words.
- B) It also relates to ....., which is your ability to connect words together naturally with stress on appropriate words.
- C) Your use of .....should be possible to express a range of attitudes and meanings.
- D) You should also be able to pronounce individual ..... (for example consonant clusters, vowels and diphthongs) effectively.

**Word Bank: intonation, sentence stress, sounds, word stress**

2. Read the following statements made about different speakers and decide which of the following criteria they relate to. (Answers on Page 31):

- i) Grammatical Range and Accuracy
- ii) Fluency and Coherence
- iii) Lexical Resource
- iv) Pronunciation

A) *'The speaker wasn't able describe objects or feelings when the exact words were unknown.'*

B) *'The speaker's statements were rather confused and didn't seem to flow logically or clearly.'*

C) *'The speaker repeated the same words and expressions rather too often.'*

D) *'The speaker focused too much on speaking accurately so there were a lot of pauses when they spoke'*

E) *'The speaker had very flat delivery with little use of intonation to express feelings or opinions.'*

F) *'The speaker found it difficult to use language to express their ideas and opinions effectively.'*

G) *'The speaker had difficulty pronouncing certain vowels and consonant clusters.'*

\* Aiming for Band 7 or higher? See our Step 3 email for an explanation of the Band scores at this level.

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# Step 4

## Know Yourself

Learn what you do well and what needs improving

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### IELTS Speaking FAQs



Visit our growing list of answers to frequently asked questions about the IELTS Speaking exam:  
[ielts speaking.co.uk](http://ielts speaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

Welcome to Step 4 of 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success'. If you've completed the previous steps you now have a clear idea of the structure of the Speaking exam and how the examiner will grade you. Here's a reminder of the second goal we identified in Step 1:

***Goal 2: Know your strengths in speaking English and the areas you need to improve.***

There's no short cut to improving your general proficiency in English as measured by your use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. Your English is currently at a particular level and this will only improve over time depending on the amount of practice you put in. This is why you need to take every opportunity both in class and during self-study to improve your English Speaking skills. This will come about by practising ALL skills, not just speaking. Your vocabulary will grow the more you read in English, the more you listen to spoken English the better your pronunciation will become.

But what other steps can you take to improve your spoken English in preparation for the exam?

Start by looking at your own habits when speaking English. For example, do you worry a lot about making mistakes and therefore speak slowly and deliberately? Do you wait to be asked for your opinion before saying anything during a discussion? Do you find yourself hesitating a lot when speaking at length? Habits like these mean you're not making the most of your opportunities to speak English.

## Step 4

Read the statements below, some of which appeared in the earlier assessment quiz. Grade yourself from 1 to 5 on each one. (1 = Often, 5 = Never)

### Self Assessment

- A) Do you tend to focus too much on speaking accurately at the expense of your fluency skills?
- B) Do you speak very quickly with little concern for accuracy?
- C) Do you often answer questions briefly with little detail?
- D) Do you find it difficult to deal with comments or questions you don't understand?
- E) Do you wait to be asked questions rather than initiating conversation yourself?
- F) Do you spend most of the time talking and rarely ask questions?
- G) Do you often repeat the same words and expressions instead of using a variety of vocabulary?
- H) Do you find it difficult to find the words or grammar to explain what you mean?
- I) Do you run out of things to say when making a long turn before the time's up?
- J) Are your long turns rather disorganized?
- K) Do you hesitate a lot during long turns?
- L) Do you find it difficult to vary your intonation?
- M) Do you find it difficult pronouncing certain sounds such as vowels, diphthongs or consonant clusters?

**If you scored too many 1s and 2s, set yourself the task of improving at least one grade in all areas during your exam preparation. Your English proficiency will improve when you change habits that slow down the development of your spoken English.**

\* Do you need to change your English speaking habits? See our Step 4 email for our 5 top tips.

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# Step 5

## Grow Your Vocabulary

Raise your vocabulary to an advanced level

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### IELTS Topic Vocabulary



Build your topic vocabulary with our FREE lessons on the IELTS Speaking website:  
[ielts speaking.co.uk](http://ielts speaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

Welcome to Step 5 of 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success' where we'll turn our attention to the third goal we identified in Step 1:

#### ***Goal 3: Take every opportunity to develop your English***

The most important thing you can do over the coming months is to increase your use of English vocabulary. There's no way of knowing which subjects you'll be asked to talk about in the exam. It's therefore very important you're able to use vocabulary to talk about a range of common topics such as 'sport', 'education' or 'travel'.

Try keeping records of new words or expressions organized around topic areas. Grouping words in categories like this can help you remember them. A good starting point is our topic vocabulary lessons on the IELTS Speaking website!

When keeping records of new vocabulary remember: words aren't used in isolation and will often form part of an expression or fixed set of words. It's therefore important at advanced level to show you're able to call on 'chunks' of vocabulary rather than just individual words.

Take the word 'thing' for example. We know 'thing' means a nameless object, such as in the expression: 'a thing for peeling potatoes'. However, you'll also find the word used in ready-made phrases, such as 'the thing is', 'all sorts of things' and 'there's no such thing as' - three very common chunks that are well worth remembering.

What kind of chunks should you look out for? Chunks appear in all sorts of ways: as collocations and idioms, in set phrases such as 'I was wondering if' and 'all the best' and what teachers call 'discourse markers' like 'as I was saying' or 'as far as I know'. Let's look at each of these in more detail.

### 1) Collocations and idioms

Chunks include common collocational phrases (words that go together), idioms and phrasal verbs. For example, which prepositions are missing from the sentences below?

- A) I was ..... the impression the class had been cancelled.
- B) You're not old and you really shouldn't think that you're ..... the hill at 60.
- C) The thief made ..... with valuable personal possessions and a great deal of money.

Answers

- A) **under** the impression (collocational phrase)
- B) **over** the hill (idiom)
- C) make **off** with (phrasal verb)

### 2) Common sets of polite expressions

Chunks like 'See you later' or 'Take a seat' are often used in everyday communication and learning them can help you improve English fluency. Which of the following do you regularly use?

- 'All the best'
- 'See you soon'
- 'Mind how you go'
- 'Have a nice day'
- 'How do you do?'
- 'You're welcome'

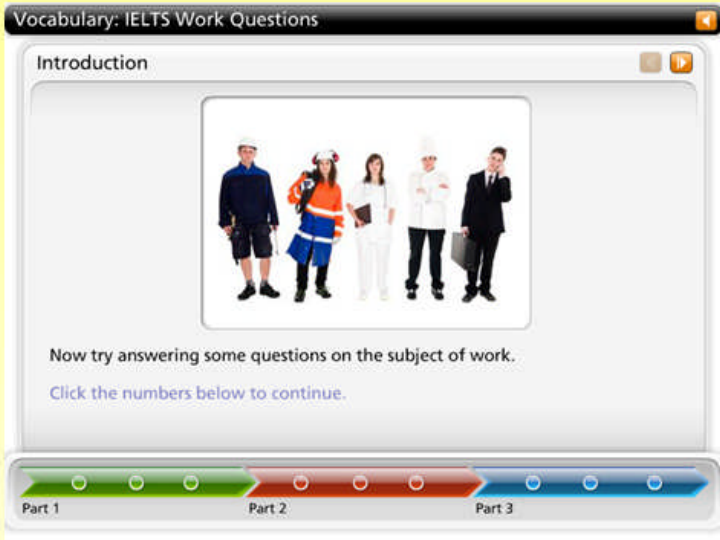
### 3) Discourse markers

Discourse markers are used in both written and spoken English to link what has come before to what comes next. You'll already know of discourse markers used in written English such as 'on the one hand', 'turning now to' or 'in conclusion'. Typical single word discourse markers in spoken English include 'now', 'so', 'actually' and 'well'. As your English fluency skills improve you'll find yourself using informal discourse markers such as the following more often:

- 'I see what you mean but'
- 'By the way'
- 'Sort of'
- 'Mind you'
- 'You know'
- 'Let's see'

How can you learn chunks? First of all you'll need to notice them. Read interviews in English magazines which feature direct speech and make a note of any chunks you come across. You'll discover that the most frequent - and therefore most useful - chunks will consist of the most common words you're probably already familiar with.

## Increase your advanced vocabulary



**IELTS Speaking: *Advanced* includes vocabulary quizzes and the chance to use new chunks in practice tests!**

### IELTS Speaking: *Advanced*

Try grouping new chunks into categories depending upon how you would use them. For example, the following can all be used to show that you have something else to say:

- 'By the way'
- 'While I remember'
- 'And another thing is'
- 'Before I forget'

Say the expressions out loud to get a feel for the rhythm. For example each chunk below has two stressed syllables:

- '**By** the **way**'
- '**While** I **remember**'
- 'And **another** thing **is**'
- '**Before** I **forget**'



Using new chunks of vocabulary rather than the same phrases you're comfortable with will help you improve English fluency.

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## **Step 5**

- 1) Keep a written record of any new chunks you come across.
- 2) Try to use any new chunks you find in the topic vocabulary section of the IELTS

Speaking website:

<http://www.ieltspeaking.co.uk/ielts-vocabulary/>

\* See our Step 5 email for the 6 key areas of vocabulary areas to revise.

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# Step 6

## Polish Your Grammar

Know how to showcase your use of English

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### IELTS Language Lab



Visit our IELTS Language Lab for feedback on advanced level learners attempting IELTS-style Speaking tests:  
[ielts speaking.co.uk](http://ielts speaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

Welcome to Step 6 of 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success'. We now turn our attention to a subject that often causes students lots of sleepless nights: grammar!

To start with, it's worth remembering that spoken English differs from the written form of the language – when we speak we don't have the time to form very complex sentences in the same way we would aim for when writing.

However, on the exam day you'll be having your language skills assessed and you'll want to impress the examiner with your use of English.

So how can you go about working on this area of English beforehand?

1) Start by learning the functional language you'll need to respond fully to the Speaking tasks. Things like 'narrating past events', 'speculating' or 'stating opinions' are the kind of functions you'll be required to carry out and focusing on your ability to use these is a good starting point for your grammar revision.

According to the IELTS Handbook, these are the kind of functions that are used regularly during the Speaking test:

- Providing personal information
- Narrating and paraphrasing
- Providing non-personal information
- Summarising

- Comparing
- Expressing opinions
- Explaining
- Conversation repair
- Suggesting
- Contrasting
- Justifying opinions
- Expressing a preference
- Speculating

Some of these functions are rather general. For example, ‘providing personal information’ could include using a wide range of grammar to talk about yourself.

However, others are more specific and can be easily matched to particular grammar areas. For example, ‘contrasting’ includes the ability to use comparative and superlative forms, ‘speculating’ will mean being able to use conditionals appropriately and of course ‘narrating’ will mean using past tenses effectively.

It’s also worth remembering that a lot of these functions rely on some of the set expressions or ‘chunks’ we were looking at in Step 5. For example, justifying opinions can be done with the use of phrases like ‘If you ask me’ or ‘As far as I’m concerned’. ‘Contrasting expressions include phrases like ‘On the one hand’, ‘In comparison’ and ‘In contrast to’.

## Improve your advanced grammar

**IELTS Speaking: *Advanced* focuses on the common grammar mistakes made at advanced level!**

## IELTS Speaking: *Advanced*

2) Another starting point in your grammar practice is to identify areas of weakness. Perhaps you have problems with articles (a/the) or using correct verb forms such as suggest + ing, or 'rather + infinitive'. Listen to our feedback in the IELTS Language Lab section of the website. You may come across advanced speakers who have similar problems to you.

3) During your preparation, practise identifying the grammatical structures each task invites you to use in the Speaking paper. For example, pay attention to the tenses used in the Part 1 questions. The likelihood is you'll need to use the same tense in your answers. For example:

Where do you live? (Present)

Did you go on holiday last year? (Past)

How long have you been studying English? (Present perfect)

Similarly, a typical Part 2 task might be:

Describe an item of technology you have that is very important for you. You should say:

- what the technology is

- when you got it

- how often you use it

and say how different your life would be without it.

The task requires the speaker to use past and present tenses and most importantly, the ability to speculate in response to the final prompt 'say how different your daily life would be without it.'

The more you practice this with IELTS-style questions, the easier you'll find it to identify key language and how well you're able to use it.

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## Step 6

1) Look through one or two of the practice tests on the IELTS Speaking website. Identify the grammar you're invited to use in each question or task.

2) Listen to some of the student recordings and see if they use this grammar and whether they use it accurately.

\* See our Step 6 email for our list of the most common mistakes made at advanced level.

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# Step 7

## Focus on Fluency

Learn the skills and strategies to speak fluently

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### 5-Minute Functions



Learn some of the key functional expressions to help you improve your fluency skills.

Visit our 5-Minute Functions page on the IELTS Speaking website:  
[ielts speaking.co.uk](http://ielts speaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

Welcome to Step 7 of 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success'. We'll now look at fluency, a skill which is often held back by the fear of making mistakes.

For many students, this fear often leads to them speaking very deliberately and sometimes rather hesitantly. However, if this applies to you, remember; one key criteria in the IELTS assessment is your ability to speak fluently and so you'll need to practice this area of English before the exam.

What easier way to start than speaking to yourself? OK, not in public or you may get some strange looks, but when you find yourself alone you have the perfect opportunity to practise speaking fluently without worrying about making mistakes.

1) Try an oral diary - at the end of each day talk about 2 things that happened you feel good about, 2 things you wished you'd done better. This is good practice in past tenses and in speculating with the use of conditionals and modals such as: 'I wish ...', 'If only ...' 'I should have ...'.

2) There's a popular radio show called 'Just a Minute' where guests have to speak for one minute on a given subject. Try this yourself - it's great practice in timing yourself ready for the exam and will give you lots of practice in speaking at length on a subject. Write a series of statements on different cards. For example:

Everyone should become a vegetarian.  
People are too materialistic.  
Describe the best place you've ever visited.

You could also come up with very general terms to talk about such as: 'skateboards', 'happiness', 'window shopping' etc.

With the timer ready, pick a card at random and get speaking!

3) Practise describing graphics from magazines or newspapers. Give your talk a simple structure:

- Introduce the photo(s) with a statement on the general theme or subject matter. For example, 'This/These photo(s) show(s) .....
- Describe what you can see. For example, in the foreground ... in the background, on the left ....
- Practise speculating on what might be going on or what might have led up to the scene(s). For example: 'The people might be ...', 'It's possible that ...'.

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## Step 7

Self-assess your fluency levels using the following techniques:

1) Record yourself Speaking English. Listen to the recording and concentrate on the pauses that occur in your statements. If your fluency levels are good they will occur after each content chunk, for example:

*I live in Birmingham (pause) it's England's second main city (pause) it's in the Midlands (pause) about an hour on the train from London.*

If your fluency levels are at a lower level pauses will occur in a more haphazard way as you think of words or structures. For example:

*I sometimes (pause) take part in (pause) performances in our local theatre (pause) I really like (pause) acting and I hope to join a course in (pause) drama at college.*

2) Remember that learning and using chunks of vocabulary in set expressions or functional phrases will improve your 'words-per-minute'!

**Learn essential functional language**

Welcome to IELTS Speaking: *Advanced*

**Unit 1**  
Give full answers to questions  
(Part 1, 3)  
>> [Launch Unit 1](#)

**Unit 2**  
Showcase your English (1)  
(Part 1, 3)  
>> [Launch Unit 2](#)

**Unit 3**  
Focus on fluency  
(Part 1, 2, 3)  
>> [Launch Unit 3](#)

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Download our FREE weekly 'Get Speaking Task Sheet'

**IELTS Speaking: *Advanced* includes free access to our Functions Toolkit!**

**IELTS Speaking: *Advanced***

3) Record yourself doing one of the tasks above and count the number of words you utter in 1 minute. Do this again a few weeks later and see if you're able to utter more words in the same time. Hopefully you'll see a real improvement!

\* See our Step 7 email for the chance to rate non-native speakers' fluency skills.

# Step 8

## Assess Pronunciation

Be confident you can speak clearly on the big day

### IELTS Speaking Recordings



Record yourself trying one of our online practice tests. Get feedback on your pronunciation from our Facebook fans: [ielts speaking.co.uk](http://ielts speaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

Welcome to Step 8 of your 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success'. We'll now turn our attention to pronunciation.

Let's start by defining what we mean by pronunciation.

To begin with you'll need to show you can pronounce individual sounds of English clearly. Can you produce long and short vowels correctly, such as in 'ship' or 'sheep'? Are you able to pronounce diphthongs (double vowels) as in 'hear' or 'hair'? What about voiced or unvoiced consonants as in 'bear' and 'pair'?

Another important area of pronunciation is word stress. Words with more than one syllable will have a syllable that is stressed. For example PHOtograph has the stress on the first syllable whereas the stress falls on the second syllable in phoTOgrapher.

In addition to word stress you'll need to produce appropriate sentence stress. This refers to the rhythm of English which tends to emphasis key words in a sentence. For example, in this sentence the natural rhythm would be as follows:

- 'I've got an **INT**erview on **MON**day'.

If the speaker wanted to emphasis the day of the week the sentence would have a different stress:

- 'I've got an *int*erview on **MON**day'.

Alternatively, if the speaker wanted to stress the activity it would be pronounced as:

- 'I've got an **INT**erview on *Mon*day'.



Intonation, the final aspect of pronunciation, refers to the rise and fall of units of speech, and is often key to fully understanding the meaning behind a statement. For example,

- *'It's too late.'*

could be expressing surprise, irritation, disappointment or many other emotions depending on the intonation used.

So how do you go about improving your pronunciation?

Remember that your pronunciation will be assessed on how easy it is for the examiner to understand your English. This does NOT mean you'll need to sound like a native speaker! English is spoken by a very wide range of nationalities, both native and non-native speakers and they all bring their own unique sound to the language.

You should be aiming for clarity in your pronunciation and to this end you'll need to identify areas that may need improving. Here are my suggestions for some of the things you can do to improve pronunciation.

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## Step 8

1) If you have a good dictionary it will give you a phonetic transcription of how each word is pronounced. Learn the phonetic alphabet (see our chart on the next page) and then practice the pronunciation of words using these dictionary transcriptions. Finally check your pronunciation using an online dictionary with audio examples such as the Cambridge online dictionary:

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

2) Research the typical pronunciation problems speakers of your mother tongue have when speaking English. Work on improving in these areas first.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-native\\_pronunciations\\_of\\_English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-native_pronunciations_of_English)

3) Listen to English as much as possible and pay attention to the speaker's pronunciation. Record short extracts of spoken English and replay each one, listening to the stress and intonation used.

# The Phonetic Alphabet

## Vowels and diphthongs

- 1 i: as in *see* /si:/
- 2 ɪ as in *sit* /sɪt/
- 3 e as in *ten* /ten/
- 4 æ as in *hat* /hæt/
- 5 ɑ: as in *arm* /ɑ:m/
- 6 ɒ as in *got* /gɒt/
- 7 ɔ: as in *saw* /sɔ:/
- 8 ʊ as in *put* /pʊt/
- 9 u: as in *too* /tu:/
- 10 ʌ as in *cup* /kʌp/
- 11 ɜ: as in *fur* /fɜ:(r)/
- 12 ə as in *ago* /əgəʊ/
- 13 eɪ as in *page* /peɪdʒ/
- 14 əʊ as in *home* /həʊm/
- 15 aɪ as in *five* /faɪv/
- 16 aʊ as in *now* /naʊ/
- 17 ɔɪ as in *join* /dʒɔɪn/
- 18 ɪə as in *near* /nɪə(r)/
- 19 eə as in *hair* /heə(r)/
- 20 ʊə as in *pure* /pjʊə(r)/

## Consonants

- 1 p as in *pen* /pen/
- 2 b as in *bad* /bæd/
- 3 t as in *tea* /ti:/
- 4 d as in *did* /dɪd/
- 5 k as in *cat* /kæt/
- 6 g as in *got* /gɒt/
- 7 tʃ as in *chin* /tʃɪn/
- 8 dʒ as in *June* /dʒu:n/
- 9 f as in *fall* /fɔ:l/
- 10 v as in *voice* /vɔɪs/
- 11 θ as in *thin* /θɪn/
- 12 ð as in *then* /ðen/
- 13 s as in *so* /səʊ/
- 14 z as in *zoo* /zu:/
- 15 ʃ as in *she* /ʃi:/
- 16 ʒ as in *vision* /vɪʒ(ə)n/
- 17 h as in *how* /haʊ/
- 18 m as in *man* /mæn/
- 19 n as in *no* /nəʊ/
- 20 ŋ as in *sing* /sɪŋ/
- 21 l as in *leg* /leg/
- 22 r as in *red* /red/
- 23 j as in *yes* /jes/
- 24 w as in *wet* /wet/

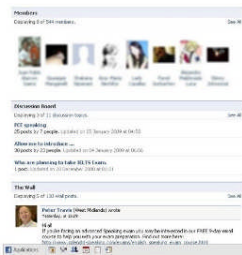
\* Want to test your pronunciation? See our Step 8 email for our pronunciation quiz.

# Step 9

## Get Speaking Partners

You're not alone – find speaking partners online

Join our  
IELTS  
community



Meet up with thousands of IELTS students on our dedicated Facebook Page:  
[ieltsspeaking.co.uk](http://ieltsspeaking.co.uk)

### Introduction

Welcome to Step 9 of 'Roadmap to IELTS Speaking Success' and another reminder of our third Goal:

***Goal 3: Take every opportunity to develop your English!***

If you're looking for speaking partners and are fortunate enough to be studying as part of a class, you'll have the opportunity to arrange out-of-class get-togethers with your colleagues. (Of course, you should also make sure you take every opportunity to speak English in class as well!)

There may be native speakers working or studying in your area who would be willing to help you with your English in return for the chance to practise your language. However, care needs to be taken when meeting up with strangers face-to-face and in any case, work or study schedules may make this option difficult.

Fortunately, new technology offers lots of opportunities to join online communities made up of people looking to practise English with others. Meetings can be arranged at a time that suits you, you can speak from the comfort of your own home and in the process make new friends from all over the world.

Our own IELTS Speaking Page on Facebook has thousands of members, many of whom are looking for speaking partners.

In order to post messages to the group you'll need to join Facebook, and in order to speak online you'll need to set up an account with a service like Skype. Finally, armed with a pair of headphones and a microphone you'll be ready to chat!

And if you need exercises to use with your partner, download our FREE weekly IELTS Speaking Task Sheet:



You'll find the task sheets here:

<http://www.ielts-speaking.co.uk/ielts-speaking-task-sheets/>

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## Step 9

1) If you don't already have an account with an online communication tool such Skype, sign up for an account. Visit the 'Guides' page on the Skype website:

<http://www.skype.com/help/guides>

2) Join our Page on Facebook and post a welcome message:

<https://www.facebook.com/IELTSSpeaking>

3) Take time to read our safety tips about communicating online:

[www.splendid-speaking.com/products/safety.html](http://www.splendid-speaking.com/products/safety.html)

\* See our Step 9 email for our top 10 tips for online communication.

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# Step 10

## Tips for the Big Day

Some final advice for a successful exam

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### The IELTS Speaking Advanced Course



"I will definitely recommend it to my students interested in taking the exam. Extremely helpful!"  
**Ana, Teacher**

### Introduction

That's it ... we've nearly come to the end of our 10-step mini-course. We hope you've found it useful and we've encouraged you to practise your speaking skills as often and as efficiently as possible.

Please get in touch if you have questions about anything we've covered ... or anything we haven't. And let us know how you do in your exam - we love to hear from our visitors. To finish, here are some final tips for the exam day:

#### In general

- 1) Listen carefully to instructions and questions.
- 2) Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you don't understand something.
- 3) Smile and make frequent eye-contact with the examiner and your partner if you have one.
- 4) Avoid nervous habits like playing with your hair or biting your lip.
- 5) Don't apologise for feeling nervous! Be positive!

#### Conversations and discussions

- 1) Give full answers to questions when appropriate and avoid unhelpful 'yes' and 'no' responses.
- 2) When giving an opinion back it up with an example or justification.

#### Long turns

- 1) Listen carefully to the instructions.
- 2) Keep to the topic.
- 3) Structure your talk with a clear introduction main body and conclusion and use signposting words and expressions to guide the listener through your talk.

- 4) Deliver the talk with passion and conviction, using examples or a (short) personal anecdote to make a point.
- 5) We often speak quickly when we're feeling nervous so try to focus on speaking clearly and take time to pause for breath.

\* See our Step 10 email for more tips on how to be successful on the big day.

## **Finally ... would you like an easier and more effective way to improve your speaking skills and confidence as the Exam day approaches?**

It's true ... in addition to your English ability there are skills and you can learn and practise that really WILL help you face the exam day with increased confidence.

## Learn our Key Speaking Strategies!

Unit 10: Troubleshooting  
Welcome

 <p><b>Objectives</b></p>	 <p><b>Tricky Questions</b></p>	 <p><b>Dealing with Mistakes</b></p>
 <p><b>Lost for Words</b></p>	 <p><b>Confirming Understanding</b></p>	 <p><b>Vocabulary &amp; Revision Tests</b></p>

**IELTS Speaking: *Advanced* comes packed with key communication strategies to get that top grade!**

## **IELTS Speaking: *Advanced***

<http://www.ieltspeaking.co.uk/ielts-speaking-course/>

# IELTS Speaking: *Advanced*: Students and teachers say:

“This is a wonderful site and concept to help people improve communication and confidence.”

Bhavna, India

“Useful for people who do not attend speaking classes all around the world to save their money!”

Amir

“It is a step-by-step teaching procedure, which is good to understand.”

Vishal, India

“To score a band of 9 on the IELTS speaking test, Splendid Speaking site is the best to visit. They provide a stepwise approach that boosts your morale”.

Rebecca, Ghana

“A really helping hand for those who don’t have an opportunity to be checked at home. Following the steps and instructions can motivate a student and achieving success in only the matter of time.”

Olga, Russia

“Everything is perfect.”

Tanira, Australia

“I thought the comments on chunking and how to sound fluent were very useful. Learners can read and listen to the models of how to pause naturally without sounding overly hesitant when trying to express their thoughts or make comments.”

Anne, UK

"I will definitely recommend it to my students interested in taking the exam. Extremely helpful!"

Ana, Teacher

“Your new learning tool is very useful for both students and educators. It highlights the typical problems of candidates and gives clear examples, explanations that help students to be more aware of these issues during the preparation. The media tool is attractive and easy to use so working with it was a pleasure.”

Kóródi, Hungary

“I think it’s fabulous! I’m really impressed with the lesson I’ve just done... You are doing such a wonderful job to help us with English... THANK YOU!!!”

Lubchik, UK

# Appendix

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## Step 3: Answers to Assessment Criteria Quiz

Q1

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

- A) range
- B) accurate
- C) appropriate

Fluency and Coherence

- A) clearly
- B) fluency
- C) length
- D) relevant.

Lexical Resource

- A) range
- B) exact
- C) paraphrasing

Pronunciation

- A) word stress
- B) sentence stress
- C) intonation
- D) sounds

Q2

- A) Lexical Resource
- B) Fluency and Coherence
- C) Lexical Resource
- D) Fluency and Coherence
- E) Pronunciation
- F) Grammatical Range
- G) Pronunciation