

## IELTS Listening tips and useful phrases

*Cross out the false/ bad tips below, leaving true/ debatable/ it depends ones as they are.*

### On the day of the exam

1. Do an IELTS Listening practice exam in the morning before the exam.
2. Listen again to an exam listening that you have done before on the way to the test, e.g. on your mp3 player on the train on the way to the exam.
3. Learn some vocabulary that you have got from previous listenings on the way to the test.
4. On the way to the test, have some English on in the background such as English music or music radio with an English-speaking DJ without concentrating on it, just to attune your ear to English/ turn on your “English brain”.

### Before the tasks start

5. Although they are the same in each exam, you should listen carefully to the instructions before you are allowed to open the paper (just to get used to listening carefully to English and because there is nothing else you can do at that time anyway).
6. When you are allowed to open your paper, first underline important words in the instructions such as how many words and numbers can go in each gap.
7. “Up to two words or a number” in the instructions means “more than 20” is okay as an answer.
8. “Up to two words and/ or a number” means “more than 20” is okay as an answer.
9. When you are allowed to open your paper, read as far ahead as you can in the paper before the first listening task starts, e.g. up to question 20.
10. Listen carefully for how many questions you will be tested on in the next extract and just read those questions, underlining key words.
11. The most important key words are those which might be different between what is said in the text and the question (“slowly” in “work slowly” because the speaker might say “work at a reasonable speed”, etc)
12. If you still have time before the recording starts, starting reading the instructions for the following recording.
13. If you still have time before the recording starts and it is a task with gaps, try to guess what kind of word or number could go in each gap.
14. You can usually guess what kind of word (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) or number (date, price, large number, etc).
15. You can often guess something more specific about the word or number that goes in the gap (that the date is between May and July, that the day is at the weekend, that the price is fairly low, etc)
16. You can sometimes guess exactly what goes in a gap from your knowledge of the subject, especially if it is your specialist area.
17. You can sometimes guess which multiple choice option (A, B, C or D) is correct, for example if you have visited the city which is being talked about.
18. You should usually have some idea about which multiple choice option is most likely before listening.
19. There is sometimes one multiple choice option which you can eliminate before listening.
20. If you still have time before the recording starts, think about how the key words might be rephrased (= said in other word) in the recording.
21. It's worth listening carefully to the one example answer to get used to the voices/ accents that you will hear in the rest of the first listening.

### **While listening**

22. There is usually a long introduction before the answer to the first question is said, during which you should listen carefully for the answer to the first question.
23. You should keep the first two or three questions in mind when you listen to the long introduction, in case you miss the answer to the first question.
24. The answers could come in any order, so you need to keep all the answers in mind all the time.
25. The answers are always in the same order as the questions on the question sheet.
26. You should just listen for the information without writing anything, then fill in the answers from memory in the time that is given to check your answers.
27. Make notes of everything you understand while you are listening.
28. With multiple choice questions you can always eliminate the other two options, because things contradicting those two things are always said in the recording.
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### **Transferring your answers to the separate answer sheet**

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76. Play and particularly tricky sections over and over until you can repeat them at the same speed and with the same pronunciation and rhythm as the recording, perhaps as "shadow reading" (= reading, listening and speaking all at the same time, trying to match the recording exactly).
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84. It can be useful to learn vocabulary that is likely to come up in the academic settings of the exam ("seminar", "students' union", "PhD", etc)
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86. Education vocabulary that is different in British and American English ("primary school" for "elementary school", "secondary school" for "junior high school", "fresher/ first year

student” for “freshman”, “second year student” for “sophomore”, “maths” for “math”, “lecturers” for “professors”, “halls of residence” for “student dorm”, “term” for “semester”, “revise” for “review”, etc) is very likely to come up because the conversations often take place in an educational setting such as universities.

87. If you are particularly bad at spelling, it can be worth studying common spelling mistakes in English, or common spelling mistakes in IELTS (“bachelor” instead of “batchelor”, “environment” not “enviroment”, “questionnaire” not “questionaire”, “technical” not “tecknical”, “definitely” not “definatly”, “opportunity” not “oppotunity”, “necessary” not “necesary”, “occasion” not “ocasion”, “success” not “succes”, “independent” not “independant”, “equipment” not “equiptment” etc).
88. Make sure you know how to pronounce numbers such as dates and times in English, including different ways of saying the same numbers (“the seventh of September”/ “September seventeen”, “twenty ten”/ “two thousand ten”/ “two thousand and ten”, “four p.m.”/ “four o’clock in the afternoon”/ “sixteen hundred hours”, “noon”/ “midday”/ “twelve p.m.”/ “twelve o’clock in the afternoon”, “seven forty five”/ “quarter to eight”/ “a quarter to eight”, “a half”/ “zero point five”/ “nought point five”, “one billion seven hundred million”/ “one point seven billion”, “a hundred fifteen”/ “one hundred and fifteen”, etc).
89. Make sure you know how to pronounce the alphabet including letters which sound similar to each other so that you can understand dictated spellings (“double” vs “W”, “double U” vs “W”, “B” vs “V”, “G” vs “Z”, “M” vs “N”, etc).
90. It’s worth learning symbols and abbreviations for units of money and measurements to avoid spelling and grammar mistakes in the exam, e.g. the symbols and abbreviations for kilometres, millimetres, kilogrammes, grams, litres, dollars, Euros, pounds (km, mm, kg, g, l, \$, etc).

*Check your answers with the answer key or as a class.*

*Ask about any tips or language which you don’t understand or aren’t sure about.*

## Suggested answers

*Bold means not a good idea.*

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student” for “freshman”, “second year student” for “sophomore”, “maths” for “math”, “lecturers” for “professors”, “halls of residence” for “student dorm”, “term” for “semester”, “revise” for “review”, etc) is very likely to come up because the conversations often take place in an educational setting such as universities.

87. If you are particularly bad at spelling, it can be worth studying common spelling mistakes in English, or common spelling mistakes in IELTS (“bachelor” instead of “batchelor”, “environment” not “enviroment”, “questionnaire” not “questionaire”, “technical” not “tecknical”, “definitely” not “definatly”, “opportunity” not “oppotunity”, “necessary” not “necesary”, “occasion” not “ocasion”, “success” not “succes”, “independent” not “independant”, “equipment” not “equiptment” etc).
88. Make sure you know how to pronounce numbers such as dates and times in English, including different ways of saying the same numbers (“the seventh of September”/ “September seventeen”, “twenty ten”/ “two thousand ten”/ “two thousand and ten”, “four p.m.”/ “four o’clock in the afternoon”/ “sixteen hundred hours”, “noon”/ “midday”/ “twelve p.m.”/ “twelve o’clock in the afternoon”, “seven forty five”/ “quarter to eight”/ “a quarter to eight”, “a half”/ “zero point five”/ “nought point five”, “one billion seven hundred million”/ “one point seven billion”, “a hundred fifteen”/ “one hundred and fifteen”, etc).
89. Make sure you know how to pronounce the alphabet including letters which sound similar to each other so that you can understand dictated spellings (“double” vs “W”, “double U” vs “W”, “B” vs “V”, “G” vs “Z”, “M” vs “N”, etc).
90. It’s worth learning symbols and abbreviations for units of money and measurements to avoid spelling and grammar mistakes in the exam, e.g. the symbols and abbreviations for kilometres, millimetres, kilogrammes, grams, litres, dollars, Euros, pounds (km, mm, kg, g, l, \$, etc).

**Brainstorming stage**

*Without looking above for now, brainstorm examples of the good tips below into the gaps given.*

**While listening**

The words before and after the gap are almost always different in the actual listening, so you need to listen out for synonyms (“\_\_\_\_\_” for “the majority of”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “cost”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “give out”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “a variety of”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “an Introduction to...”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “research”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “on the Internet”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “to separate”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “not as long as”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “few”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “a threat”, “\_\_\_\_\_” for “consists of”), opposites (“\_\_\_\_\_” for “ancestors”) or examples.

There are often phrases to warn you that dictation such as spelling names is coming (\_\_\_\_\_ )

There are often phrases that show that the next thing that is going to be said won't be the right answer (\_\_\_\_\_ )

There are often phrases that show that the last thing that was said wasn't the right answer. (\_\_\_\_\_ )

There are often phrases that show that the next thing that will be said will be the right answer (\_\_\_\_\_ )

There are often phrases which show that the last thing that was said was the right answer (\_\_\_\_\_ )

There is often a word or phrase to show that the topic is changing or that they are getting down to business which can warn you that you need to listen for the next answer (\_\_\_\_\_ )

**Transferring your answers to the separate answer sheet**

Units can be written as full words or as abbreviations or symbols, but you will get no point if you spell the full word wrong or if you use a symbol or abbreviation which is incorrect in English (using “centi” X instead of “\_\_\_\_\_” for “centimetre”, using “gr” X instead of “\_\_\_\_\_” for “gram”, etc)

Write countries, nationalities, languages, months, days of the week etc with capital letters ( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

Write proper nouns such as towns, names of streets, names of buildings, and names of works of art with capital letters ( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

Make sure you include hyphens if they are needed ( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

Some other compound nouns always need to be written as one word with no hyphen and no gap ( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

Other compound nouns, especially longer and more unusual ones, are written like two words with a gap and no hyphen ( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

## Preparation for the IELTS listening test

It can be useful to learn vocabulary that is likely to come up in the academic settings of the exam ( \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

If you're only familiar with American English, it can help to study British and American vocabulary differences (" \_\_\_\_\_" for "movie theatre", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "cell phone", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "parking lot", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "apartment", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "round-trip ticket", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "downtown", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "garbage/ trash", etc)

Education vocabulary that is different in British and American English (" \_\_\_\_\_" for "elementary school", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "junior high school", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "freshman", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "sophomore", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "math", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "professors", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "student dorm", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "semester", " \_\_\_\_\_" for "review", etc) is very likely to come up because the conversations often take place in an educational setting such as universities.

If you are particularly bad at spelling, it can be worth studying common spelling mistakes in English, or common spelling mistakes in IELTS (" \_\_\_\_\_" instead of "batchelor", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "enviroment", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "questionaire", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "tecknical", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "definately", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "oppotunity", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "necesary", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "ocasion", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "succes", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "independant", " \_\_\_\_\_" not "equiptment" etc).

Make sure you know how to pronounce numbers such as dates and times in English, including different ways of saying the same numbers (" \_\_\_\_\_" / "September seventeen", " \_\_\_\_\_" / "two thousand ten" / "two thousand and ten", "four p.m." / " \_\_\_\_\_" / "sixteen hundred hours", "noon" / "midday" / " \_\_\_\_\_" / "twelve o'clock in the afternoon", " \_\_\_\_\_" / "quarter to eight" / "a quarter to eight", "a half" / "zero point five" / " \_\_\_\_\_", "one billion seven hundred million" / " \_\_\_\_\_", "a hundred fifteen" / " \_\_\_\_\_", etc).