



What is wrong with all the phrases below? (Don't correct them yet, just look for their common problem)

"Yo!" / "Wassup?"

"That makes no sense to me." / "I have no idea what you are talking about."

"Eh? / What?"

"Please speak up."

"Again, please." / "Say again." / "I want you to repeat the question."

"Speak more slowly, please."

"What does this word mean?" / "Please explain this word."

"I still don't get it/ get what you are saying."

"Please say that another way."

"Discuss the what??"

"Yeah yeah yeah. I understand (now)." / "Okay, I get it."

"There's no way I can answer that question." / "I can't possibly talk about this because..."

"That's an impossible question."

"That's a stupid question." / "That's a strange question."

"Ask me the next question."

"Do I have to talk about this topic?"

"I want to/ I decided to speak about... instead."

"How (on earth) would I know?" / "Dunno."

"My hometown is crap/ sh*t"

"(That's) rubbish/ nonsense/ complete b.s."

"Are you nuts/ crazy/ out of your mind?" / "You must be kidding!"

"No kidding." / "Damn right!"

"... is bloody brilliant"

"I'm ready, so I'll start."

"Wait!"

"Give up"

"The end" / "I'm done. Now what?"

"Oh my god!" / "Sh*t!" / "Idiot! I meant to say..."

Although formality is not generally a problem in IELTS, all the language above is too informal. Think of at least slightly more formal versions each time.

What is the function of each section above?

Brainstorm other suitable phrases for each section.

Generally, what kind of language is too informal for the exam?

Generally, what kind of language is more suitable and/ or more polite?



Suggested answers

Greetings

“Yo!”/ “Wassup?” – **“Hi/ Hello”**

“Nice to meet you.”

Comprehension problems

“That makes no sense to me./ “I have no idea what you are talking about.” – **“I’m sorry, I don’t understand (the question).”/ “I’m afraid I can’t work out what the question means.”**

“Eh?/ What?” – **“Pardon?”**

“Please speak up.” – **“Could you speak a little louder?”**

“Again, please.”/ “Say again.”/ “I want you to repeat the question.” – **“Could you repeat the question?”/ “Could you say that again?”**

“Speak more slowly, please.” – **“Could you say that again a little more slowly?”**

“What does this word mean?”/ “Please explain this word.” – **“Can you explain this word?” “Could you tell me what this word means?”**

“I still don’t get it/ get what you are saying.” – “I’m afraid I still don’t understand.”

“Please say that another way.” – **“Could you explain that another way?”**

“Discuss the what??” – **“I’m afraid I didn’t catch the last word/ the last few words.”**

“Yeah yeah yeah. I understand (now).”/ “Okay, I get it.” – **“Ah, now I understand.”/ “Oh, okay. Now I see (what you mean).”**

Dealing with difficult questions

“There’s no way I can answer that question.”/ “I can’t possibly talk about this because...” – **“I’m afraid I can’t really answer that question because...”**

“That’s an impossible question.” – **“That’s a difficult question.”**

“That’s a stupid question.”/ “That’s a strange question.” – **“I’ve never really thought about that before.”/ “That’s an interesting question.”**

“Ask me the next question.” – **“Can we move onto the next question?”** (or just wait for the examiner to do so)

“Do I have to talk about this topic?” – **“Would it be possible to change topics?”** (though they might say no!)

“I want to/ I decided to speak about... instead.” – **“I couldn’t think of anything that exactly matches the question, so...”**

“How (on earth) would I know?”/ “Dunno.” – **“I’m afraid I don’t know/ I have no idea.”**

“I’m afraid I can’t think of anything to say on that topic.”

Giving opinions

“My hometown is crap/ sh*t” – **“I’m not very fond of my hometown.”/ “I can’t think of anything good to say about my hometown.”**

“(That’s) rubbish/ nonsense/ complete b.s.” – **“That doesn’t make much sense to me.”**

“Are you nuts/ crazy/ out of your mind?”/ “You must be kidding!” – **“I strongly disagree.”**

“No kidding.”/ “Damn right!” – **“Exactly!”/ “That’s exactly what I think.”**

“... is bloody brilliant” – **“... is fabulous.”**

“I think/ believe...”

“That’s a good point.”

Starting and ending

“I’m ready, so I’ll start.” – **“Can I start?”**

“Wait!” – **“Just a moment.”**

“Give up” – **“That’s all I can think of to say.”**

“The end”/ “I’m done. Now what?” – **“I think I’ve covered everything.”**

“That’s the end of my presentation.”

“Is that enough?”

“Does that answer the question?”

Making mistakes/ Correcting yourself

“Oh my god!”/ “Sh*t!”/ “Idiot! I meant to say...” – **“Sorry, I meant to say...”**

“That is,...”