

IELTS Overview



The International English Language Testing System, or IELTS, is an international standardized test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers. IELTS is one of the major English-language tests in the world, others being the TOEFL and TOEIC.

IELTS is accepted by most Australian, British, Canadian and New Zealand academic institutions, by over 3,000 academic institutions in the United States, and by various professional organisations across the world.

No minimum score is required to pass the test. An IELTS result is issued to all test takers with **a score from "band 1" (non-user) to "band 9" (expert user)**, and each institution sets a different threshold.

The IELTS exam tests each of the four major language skills: **Speaking, listening, reading** and **writing**. Students receive a score for each individual skill, as well as an overall score. Depending on the institution, an overall score of a certain threshold may be all that's required, or a minimum score in each section.

There are two different IELTS tests: **General** and **Academic**. This sheet focuses on the **Academic** test.

Speaking (10-15 minutes) - three parts

1. **Introduction and interview** - Both examiner and student introduce themselves, and talk about general questions on familiar topics. *(4-5 minutes)*
2. **Individual and long turn** - Student receives a task card and one minute to prepare a 1-2 minute talk about a specific topic. One or two follow-up questions then asked by the examiner. *(3-4 minutes)*
3. **Two-way discussion** - Examiner asks the student further questions related to the topic from part 2. These questions are more abstract and less concrete in nature. *(4-5 minutes)*

Listening (30 minutes) - four parts

1. Student listens to a conversation between two people in an everyday social situation.
2. Student listens to a monologue set in an everyday social situation.
3. Student listens to a conversation between up to four people, set in an educational context.
4. Student listens to a monologue on an academic subject, e.g. a university lecture.

Reading (60 minutes) - three passages

The IELTS readings are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. They have been written for a non-specialist audience, and are on topics of general academic interest.

Writing (60 minutes) - two parts

1. **Graph, table, chart or diagram** - Student is presented with a diagram, which they must describe, summarise or explain. *(20 minutes, 150+ words)*
2. **Essay** - Student writes an essay in response to a point of view, argument or problem. *(40 minutes, 250+ words)*

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It can often be difficult to understand what an IELTS band score of 6.5, for example, equates to in general English ability. To make this easier, we can compare IELTS bands to measures of general English level.

Below is a diagram illustrating how IELTS band scores roughly equate to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) levels. The CEFR is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries including Thailand! It is a great way of assessing what a student **can** and **cannot do** while using English, or any other language.

CEFR		IELTS
Proficient user	C2	9
		8-9
	C1	7.5-8
		7-7.5
Independent user	B2	6-7
		5.5-6
	B1	4.5-5.5
		4-4.5
Basic user	A2	3-4
		2.5-3
	A1	1.5-2.5
		1-1.5

For stronger users of the English language, an IELTS band score above 7 is certainly attainable, given the right guidance and understanding of the testing structure. Top universities around the world, including Cambridge and Oxford, **usually require an IELTS band score of 7-7.5.**

The most common target score for Thai students is between 6 and 7. A strong independent user, who has a good understanding of how the IELTS exam works and what specific things the examiners are looking for, can achieve this score.

IELTS
Unadvised

IELTS is not easy, nor is it impossible. Many students panic after only a few lessons of study, wondering how they will ever reach the level necessary to get their target score. The answer? **Patience** and **perseverance.**

No one can achieve their target score overnight, unless they weren't aiming high enough! Work on objectives one at a time. **Lots of small improvements can eventually add up to vast increases in final scores!** The good news is that you have come to the right place.

Our teachers will **work with you**, and focus on developing the skills that you need to improve the most. You can either follow our teachers' plans, or if you prefer we can target the areas that you believe to be your weakness. Feel free to make any specific requests you may have to our staff or teachers at any time.