

40 TIPS FOR IELTS SPEAKING PART 2 – BY SIMON

1. IELTS Speaking Part 2 Tips

Before the exam, prepare ideas for the six main topics:

1. Describe an object (a gift, something you use etc.)
2. Describe a person (someone you admire, a family member etc.)
3. Describe an event (a festival, celebration etc.)
4. Describe an activity (e.g. a hobby)
5. Describe a place (somewhere you visited, a holiday etc.)
6. Describe your favourite (book/film/advertisement/website)

Focus on vocabulary, not grammar or linking. In the exam, try to note down as many ideas as you can during the 1-minute preparation time - hopefully you'll be able to use ideas that you have already prepared. You don't have to cover all of the points on the task card, but it helps you to structure your answer if you do. Say as much as you can for each point, and use a real example or story at the end of your description if you need to fill time. Keep going until the examiner stops you.

2. IELTS Speaking: the importance of part 2

Students often ask me what will happen if they do badly in part 2 of the speaking test. Is it still possible to get a high score?

Yes, in theory, it is still possible to get a reasonably high score (maybe band 7) if you do badly in part 2, but you would need to give excellent answers in part 3. In practice, candidates rarely recover from a bad part 2; I don't remember anyone who made a mess of part 2 but suddenly did a fantastic part 3.

My advice: You should consider part 2 as the core of your speaking test. It's your best chance to show how good your English is, and it's the examiner's best chance to listen carefully to your use of language. In fact, it's probably the point at which most examiners get a clear idea of what score to give you.

3. IELTS Speaking: is accent important?

People often ask whether their accent will affect their IELTS score. The simple answer is no. Your score for pronunciation depends on how clearly you speak and how intelligible (easy to understand) you are.

So if accent is not important, what are the factors that affect pronunciation? I really like the explanation on this page from the Warwick University website. They look at 5 key elements of pronunciation:

There are some great tips about improving your pronunciation near the bottom of the page, but my favourites are: work on your mistakes, copy good models of speech, record yourself, slow down, and try to sound interesting / interested!

4. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Memorise and Adapt

Memorising can be a good strategy for speaking part 2 because the same topics are often repeated.

But memorising can be a risky strategy unless you are able to adapt your answers to the specific question. For example, if you prepared a description of a holiday, would you be able to adapt it for the question about a positive experience you had as a teenager?

The smart way to study for part 2 is to prepare a few key topics, then spend lots of time practising ways to adapt what you prepared to other questions.

5. IELTS Speaking: a tip for each part

Here are 3 techniques to help you give longer, more detailed answers:

1. Keep asking yourself "why?"
2. Explain the alternatives
3. Give an example

Here are three tips, one for each part of the speaking test.

Part 1: stop and smile

For part 1 of the speaking test, you need to get used to giving short answers. Many students find it difficult to stop speaking, and the examiner is forced to interrupt. My tip is to give your answer then stop and smile, showing the examiner that you are ready for the next question.

Part 2: tell a story

In the context of speaking part 2, a story is simply a long example to illustrate a point that you have made. If you're describing a person, for example, you could tell a story to illustrate why you like him/her. People find it easy to keep speaking for longer when they have a story to tell.

Part 3: include an 'if...' sentence

Look at technique number 2 (Explain the alternatives). The 'alternatives' technique helps you to say more, and it also encourages you to add a conditional 'if...' sentence, which might help your grammar score.

6. IELTS Speaking: informal expressions

Yesterday I wrote about 'an event' for IELTS Speaking Part 2. Some of the expressions I used were informal:

- we chatted (talked)

- to get together with (meet)
- to catch up with (talk to someone you haven't seen for a while)
- what my friends had been up to (had been doing)
- to wind down (relax after something tiring)

The examiner would consider these phrases to be "less common vocabulary". In other words, a few phrasal verbs or informal expressions can help you to get a high score in IELTS Speaking.

7. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a person

Here are some possible questions in this topic area:

- Describe a teacher
- Describe a famous person
- Describe a friend
- Describe a family member
- Describe a child
- Describe someone who helps people
- Describe someone who does something well

I then suggest that we choose an easy 'theme' e.g. a hard-working and friendly person. We can prepare lots of good vocabulary for this theme, and hopefully use it to describe any of the people in the list above.

8. IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe an activity

Today I'm working on a video lesson about the "describe an activity" topic. You might be asked to describe a hobby, sport or game, so it's a good idea to

be ready for this topic.

My approach is to prepare ideas for one sport (e.g. swimming) and one game (e.g.

chess). I start with a simple idea, such as "swimming is healthy". Then I search for good words and phrases related to this theme. For example:

"Swimming is healthy" theme:

- Keep fit
- Get in better shape
- A good cardiovascular workout
- Feel refreshed, rejuvenated, invigorated
- Gives me an energy boost

9. IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a place

One of my suggestions in the lesson is that you prepare some vocabulary 'themes'.

For example, here are some ideas for a description of an interesting city:

- Lively, bustling, hectic, thriving
- Cosmopolitan, multicultural
- Fascinating, unique
- A special atmosphere
- Sightseeing, entertainment
- An unforgettable experience
- Enjoyed every minute

- The time flew by
- Endless things to see and do
- It was over too quickly

10. IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a festival

A common topic for the short presentation (IELTS Speaking Part 2) is "describe an important festival in your country".

My advice is to look for a description of your festival on Wikipedia. Copy the best parts of the description and make small changes if necessary. As an example, I've copied a short description of Christmas from Wikipedia.

11. Describe a festival: Christmas

Christmas is an annual holiday that, in Christianity, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ.

Popular customs of the holiday include gift-giving, music, an exchange of greeting cards, church celebrations, a special meal, and the display of various decorations; including Christmas trees, lights, nativity scenes, and holly. In addition, Father Christmas (known as Santa Claus in some areas) is a popular figure in many countries, associated with the bringing of gifts for children.

Over the Christmas period, people decorate their homes and exchange gifts. In some countries, children perform plays re-telling the events of the Nativity, or sing carols that reference the event. Christmas, along with Easter, is the period of highest annual church attendance.

A special Christmas family meal is an important part of the celebration for many, and what is served varies greatly from country to country. In England and countries influenced by its traditions, a standard Christmas meal includes turkey, potatoes, vegetables, sausages and gravy, followed by Christmas pudding, mince pies and fruit cake.

12. IELTS Speaking Part 2: describe a person

Describe a person you admire. You should say:

- Who the person is
- What he or she is like
- And why you admire him or her.

Here are some ideas. I've underlined the best vocabulary.

- I'm going to talk about my father because he has been a major influence in my life.
- My father was always a good role model for me as I was growing up. He's hardworking, patient and understanding; he's also got a goodsense of humour and seems to get on well with everybody. Hopefully I've inherited some of these traits.
- I admire my father because I think he brought me and my brothers/sisters up well; he was quite strict but always fair, and he has always been someone I can turn to for advice. I think my father set a good example by working hard and having a positive outlook on life. I remember that he used to leave for work early and come home quite late, but he always made time for me and my brothers/sisters.

13. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe an event

Describe a recent event that made you happy. You should say:

- When and where it was
- Who was involved
- What happened
- And explain why it made you happy.

The following description contains the kind of phrases that native speakers (like me) really use. I've underlined the best vocabulary.

1. When and where: my friend's birthday party, last Saturday evening, we went for a meal in an Italian restaurant.

2. Who: there were about 10 of us, he invited some close friends and work colleagues, most of them were people I've known since university.

3. What happened: we met at the restaurant, I gave my friend a present and a birthday card, we ordered some food, while we ate dinner everyone chatted, after the main course the waiter brought out a cake and we sang 'Happy Birthday', everyone went home quite late.

4. Why it made me happy: it was great to get together with old friends, I had some interesting conversations, it was a good opportunity to catch up with

what my friends had been up to, it was a nice way to wind down after a hard week at work, the food was delicious, I went home feeling full after a fantastic meal.

14. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a place

In part 2 of the speaking test, you might have to describe a place. There are several possible questions about places. For example:

1. Describe a place you have visited.

2. Describe a historic place.

3. Describe a holiday.

4. Describe a place you would like to visit.

5. Describe somewhere you have lived or would like to live.

My advice is to prepare a description of one place that you could use to answer all of these questions. Then search the Internet for some good

vocabulary.

For example, here are some ideas I found to describe London:

- **Adjectives:** It's exciting, busy, hectic, cosmopolitan, multicultural, unique. It's historic but modern at the same time, it's a thriving, prosperous city, it's fashionable, lively, fun...

- **Activities:** London is famous for its history, culture, art, museums. Tourists go there to see Big Ben, The Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square etc. You can get a fantastic view of the city from the 'London Eye'. It's also famous for its theatres and shows in the West End, its shops, restaurants and nightlife. There are endless things to see and do.

- **Negatives:** London is expensive, crowded, stressful, polluted. The underground system is dirty, travel is overpriced and unpleasant. The cost of living is high (shopping, house prices etc.), the locals are always in a hurry and can be unfriendly, there are social problems (like you can find in most big cities).

15. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Preparing vocabulary

My main tip for speaking part 2 is to prepare good vocabulary for common topics.

On the task card, the last bullet point always asks you to explain why. This is the best part of the question in terms of vocabulary preparation. Let's take the "describe a family" question as an example:

Describe a family (not your own family) that you like. You should say

- How you know this family

- Who the people in the family are - what the members of the family are like - and explain WHY you like this family.

Here are some ideas for the "why" part of this task:

- Friendly, kind, caring, big-hearted

- Supportive, always there when you need them
- Good role models, they set a good example
- Welcoming, great hosts, their door is always open

16. IELTS Speaking: complex structures?

Students often worry that they need to use "complex structures" in the speaking test. But what is a complex structure?

This website explains the difference between simple sentences, compound sentences and complex sentences. You'll notice that compound and complex sentences are much easier than they sound! I'm sure you use them all the time without realising it.

Here's my advice: stop worrying about the need for "complex" grammar. Instead, focus on expressing your ideas well. As you explain your ideas in detail, you will naturally produce longer sentences which contain a variety of grammatical features.

17. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Sample answer

Here's the question we've been looking at in recent weeks:

Describe a subject that you think should be removed from school education programmes. You should say

- What the subject is
- Why you think it is unnecessary for children to study it - and explain what you would replace it with.

Here's my sample answer with band 7-9 vocabulary underlined:

- I'm going to suggest that art could be taken out of the school curriculum. In

my experience, art lessons at school tend to include drawing, painting, and the making of collages using paper, fabric and other household materials.

- There are a few reasons why I think that school art lessons are unnecessary. Firstly, I don't believe that drawing and painting are essential skills that children will need when they leave school. Children might find these activities enjoyable, but it's unlikely that they will need them in the working world. Secondly, children can draw, paint and make collages in their own time at home; parents can encourage this, and they can even join in.

Finally, remembering my own art lessons at school, I don't think we learnt any real art skills; the teachers left us to draw or create things, but they didn't provide much technical instruction.

- Instead of art lessons, children could do more work on core subjects like maths, science or language. These subjects are more likely to help children in later life when they enter the job market, and I think both children and their teachers would benefit if more time were devoted to them.

18. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a foreign person

Jay sent me this interesting IELTS question:

Describe a foreign person that you like. You should say:

- Where you met him/her

- Why you like him/her

- And explain what you learnt from him/her Some advice:

1. The easy choice would be to describe an English teacher. You could then talk about your lessons and easily explain what you learnt.

2. I think it would be acceptable to describe someone you have never met. Just say "I've never met the person I'm going to describe, but I hope to meet

him/her one day".

3. If you do number 2 above, choose your hero. It's best to choose someone you know a lot about. Give as much real information as possible. Do some Google research to get ideas.

19. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a conversation

Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone you didn't know. You should say

- Who the person was
- Where the conversation took place
- What you talked about
- And explain why you found the conversation interesting.

Here's my sample (band 9) answer:

- I'm going to talk about an interesting conversation that I had a couple of weeks ago in a music shop. I was walking along one of the main shopping streets in the city centre, when a large window displaying all sorts of musical instruments caught my eye. Out of curiosity, I decided to go in and have a look around.

- The person I ended up speaking to was a shop assistant on the second floor, in the area of the shop dedicated to acoustic guitars. I hadn't intended to speak to anyone, but the assistant approached me in a friendly way and asked whether I had any questions.

- I explained to the assistant that I hadn't played the guitar for years, but that I wondered what the differences were between the various acoustic guitars on show. He talked to me about the different makes and models, whether they were factory or hand made, the woods and varnishes used, the variation in sound quality, and of course the price range.

- I found the conversation fascinating because the shop assistant was so

knowledgeable. It was obvious that he had a passion for the guitar, and he didn't mind talking to me even though I had made it clear that I didn't intend to buy anything. He even picked up and played three or four of the instruments to demonstrate the differences in their sound.

20. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Difficult questions

Last week I wrote about 'using what you know'. Here are some more quick examples of how you can make a 'difficult' question much easier:

1) Describe something that you collect.

Most students panic because they don't collect anything. But this question is easier than you think. If your hobby is listening to music or reading books, just tell the examiner that you collect CDs or novels. You could talk about your "collection" of clothes or shoes. Everyone has a collection of something, even if you don't call yourself a collector.

2) Describe an important decision that you made.

Easy. Just talk about the subject you chose to study or the career you decided to pursue. If you moved to live/study in a different country, you could talk about that. 3) Describe an important letter you received.

Use the answer you gave for number 2 (with a few small changes). Talk about the letter you received confirming your place on a university course, or confirming a successful job application.

21. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a skill

Describe a practical skill that you have learnt (e.g. cooking, driving). You should say

- What the skill is
- How you learnt it
- Why you learnt it

- And how this skill has helped you.

Advice:

You need to make a quick decision, so I'd choose one of the given examples (cooking or driving). Then try to expand on each point.

1. I'm going to talk about driving, which is a practical skill that I use almost every day.

2. I learnt to drive a car by taking lessons when I was 17. My parents paid for me to have lessons with a professional driving instructor. I learnt by practising: first I had to get used to steering, changing gears and using the mirrors, then we practised things like reversing and parking. I also had to learn the highway code.

3. As a 17-year-old, I wanted to have the experience of driving a car, and I was fed up with having to walk or take the bus or train whenever I wanted to go somewhere. I also knew that driving would be an extremely useful skill.

4. Being able to drive has helped me in so many ways. The public transport where I live isn't very good, so I travel to work by car most days. Having a car makes my life much easier when it comes to things like shopping or visiting family and friends. (Last week, for example,...)

Note:

If you need to keep speaking, give examples for point 4.

22. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Something naughty you did

This has been a recent question in part 2 of IELTS speaking:

Describe something naughty you did when you were a child. Say

- What you did

- When you did it

- Why you did it
- And explain how your parents felt about it.

This is a difficult topic for most people, so it's a good idea to prepare for it before your test. If you can remember a real situation, use that. If you can't remember being naughty, invent an easy story like my example below.

Example ideas:

1. I cheated in a test at primary school by looking at the answers in my book under the table.
2. I was about ... years old, it was a ... lesson. Give some more background about the lesson, the test, the teacher etc.
3. I hadn't studied for the test, I didn't want to fail and have to retake the test at lunchtime. Give reasons why you didn't have time to study.
4. The teacher caught me and told my parents. Explain their feelings: disappointed, angry, embarrassed. Explain the punishment e.g. they 'grounded' me for a week (informal expression, meaning 'they didn't allow me to go out or see friends').

23. Students' Questions: Describe a newspaper

A few people have asked me for advice about this IELTS speaking question: Describe a newspaper or magazine that you like to read.

Here are some quick tips:

Newspaper

If you read a particular newspaper every day, choose that. Explain why you like that newspaper more than others. Say what type of stories you usually read (politics, education, science, sport etc.) and give an example of a recent article that you read. Explain why it's important for you to read the paper e.g.

to keep up-to-date with world events, or because you find it interesting or mentally stimulating.

Magazine

If you don't read a newspaper, tell the examiner that you read a magazine (even if you don't). Choose/invent a magazine about one of your hobbies or interests. This allows you to talk about something you know about. It might be a good idea to have a look at the magazines in your local shop; choose one that interests you, buy it, and use it to prepare some ideas.

24. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a building

Describe a modern building. You should say:

- Where it is
- What it is used for
- And why you like/dislike it.

Here's my example description of a building in Manchester:

1. I'm going to describe a modern building in Manchester. It's called the Beetham Tower, and it's the tallest building in the city, with about 50 floors.
2. Although it's called the Beetham Tower, most people know this building as the Hilton Hotel. In fact, the bottom half of the tower is the hotel and the top half is apartments. The apartments are expensive because the location and views make them very desirable.
3. I'm not sure if I like the design of the building, it's just a huge glass tower, but it definitely stands out. It has become a famous landmark in the city. You can see it as you approach Manchester, and it's an easy place to meet people because it's so distinctive and easy to find. The most interesting thing about the Beetham Tower is that there is a bar/restaurant on the 23rd floor

which has spectacular views of the city; it's definitely the best vantage point in Manchester because there are no walls, only huge windows, so you can look out over the city in any direction. I'd recommend anyone who visits Manchester to go there and experience the view.

These are some of the best words and phrases that I used. Look them up in a dictionary if you're not sure what they mean:

- Desirable location
- It stands out
- A famous landmark
- It's distinctive
- Spectacular views
- The best vantage point

25. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a lesson

Speak for 2 minutes about the following topic.

Describe an interesting lesson that you attended.

You should say

- Where you attended this lesson
- What it was about
- And why you found it interesting

Here are some ideas for a description of a science lesson:

1. I'm going to talk about an interesting science lesson that I attended at secondary school when I was 14 or 15 years old.
2. It was quite a long time ago, so I can't remember every detail, but the lesson

was about respiration. We learnt about how the lungs work, how we breathe, and how oxygen passes into the blood. The science teacher also talked to us about the effects of smoking on the lungs.

3. I found this lesson interesting because my science teacher, Dr. Smith, always introduced new topics by showing us a video. We watched a short film about how respiration works, and I found this much easier to understand than a science textbook. The film showed diagrams of the lungs to explain the breathing process. Later in the lesson we saw real photos of healthy lungs and lungs that had been damaged as a result of smoking; they had turned black. I think the image of a smoker's lungs is the reason why I remember this lesson.

26. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Expanded answers

Last week we looked at the first half of a question:

Describe a long walk that you enjoyed.

You should say

- When you went on this walk - where it took place

I explained that it would be easy to give a very short answer to these two points:

"Last summer I walked along a beach during my holiday in..."

But we need to expand this answer to include more information about "when" and "where".

For example:

When

I'm going to describe a walk that I enjoyed last summer while I was on holiday on the south coast of England. It was the first week of August, and we set off on the walk on the first morning of the holiday just after breakfast, at around 9 o'clock. The walk took us the whole morning and finished at lunchtime.

Where

As I mentioned, the walk took place on the south coast of England. I was on holiday with my family in a place called Dorset, and we were staying in a rented house. Our aim was to walk from the house to a place called Durdle Door beach. First we had to find the coast path, and then we followed this path for several miles until we reached Durdle Door and finally descended the steep steps that led to the beach.

27. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Educational TV programme

Describe an educational television programme that you liked. You should say

- What the programme was about
- When and where you saw it
- How you found out about this programme - and why you liked it.

Here's my band 9 answer. Can you see any 'less common' vocabulary?

- I'm going to talk about one of my favourite educational TV programmes, which is a nature documentary called 'Planet Earth'. There were eleven episodes of this programme, and each one featured a different habitat on Earth, such as mountains, caves, deserts and jungles. The aim of the 'Planet Earth' series was to take the viewer into those habitats, using spectacular footage of interesting animals, plants and landscapes.

- I first saw 'Planet Earth' on television when it was broadcast by the BBC several years ago. I think it was shown every Sunday evening, which was the perfect time to watch a fascinating nature programme. Then, a few years ago, somebody bought me the DVD box set of the whole series as a Christmas present, and I watched the episodes again.

- I found out about this TV programme because it was advertised repeatedly in the weeks before it was first aired. The TV trailers were really eye-catching

because they showed incredibly beautiful images of nature. I also recognised the voice of the narrator of the programme, the well-known naturalist David

Attenborough. It was these trailers that persuaded me to watch the first episode.

- What I liked most about the 'Planet Earth' series was its stunning photography and its global scope. For example, in the "Fresh Water" episode, they showed us the giant salamander in Japan, crocodiles in the river Nile, and river dolphins in the Amazon. I was amazed at how they had managed to film such interesting creatures in so many locations. I enjoyed learning about strange animal species, and the programme opened my eyes to the hidden wonders of our planet.

28. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a 'success'

Here's a recent part 2 question that someone sent me. How would you answer?

Describe something you did in your life that was a success. You should say

- What you did
- When you did it
- What difficulties you faced
- And how you felt when you were successful

My advice: Try to adapt a topic that you have already prepared (e.g. description of a hobby), or talk about your work or studies.

29. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a hobby

"Describe a hobby" seems like an easy topic. However, students often have

difficulty speaking for 2 minutes when the topic is easy.

Here are 3 pieces of advice to help you to speak for 2 minutes. I'll use photography as the hobby in my example answers.

1. Think about question words: What, when, where, why, who with:

- What: One of my hobbies is photography.
 - When and where: I take photos on my phone almost every day, and I have a proper camera that I use on special occasions. If I see something interesting or I want to record a particular memory, I take photos wherever I am.
- Why: I take photos so that I have a record of the things I've seen or done.
 - Who with: Most of my photos are of friends and family, but I also take pictures of interesting things that I see.

2. Describe opinions and feelings:

I like photography because it's a creative hobby and it makes you notice the world around you. I love capturing special moments or unusual or beautiful images, and it's a great feeling to be able to look back through my pictures and relive different experiences. These memories usually cheer me up.

3. Tell a story related to the topic:

The last time I took photos on a special occasion was at my friend's wedding a few weeks ago. I got some great pictures of the bride and groom and their guests celebrating. After the wedding I made an album of all the best pictures and sent it to my friend as a present.

Task: Try describing your own hobby using the 3 tips above.

30. IELTS Speaking: A teacher's questions

A teacher in China asked me to help with the following queries:

1) Can students ask the IELTS examiner to repeat a question?

Yes. They can say something like: "Sorry, can you repeat that please?". It won't affect your score if you do this.

2) Can students ask the examiner to clarify a question?

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Not in part 1 or 2. The examiner can only repeat the same question in part 1, and refer you to the task card in part 2. In part 3, it's fine for students to ask for clarification e.g. "Sorry, I'm not sure what you mean by that". The examiner is allowed to rephrase the question in part 3. If you ask for clarification once, it shouldn't affect your score, but don't do this too many times!

3) Can students ask the examiner to define a word?

Again, only in part 3. The student could say: "Sorry, could you explain what you mean by... (unknown word)?"

4) Can students ask for more time to think?

I don't recommend doing that. Students lose marks for long hesitations, so it's best for them to practise answering quickly.

5) Can students ask to miss a question in parts 1 and 3?

They can, but they will lose points, so I don't recommend doing this. It's always best to attempt an answer.

6) Can students ask for a different topic in part 2?

No. They must take the topic card that the examiner gives them.

31. IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'Local area' answer

Describe a change that you would like to see in your local area. You should say

- What the change would be
- Who would be involved in making the change

- How it would be done

- And why you would like to see the change happen.

Here's my band 9 sample answer:

- The change that I'd like to see in my local neighbourhood is the pedestrianisation of the main shopping street in the town centre. I'd like to see traffic diverted around this area in order to make it safer and more attractive for visitors and shoppers. Most of the traffic that clogs up the main street is just passing through the town, but it's the local people who have to put up with the congestion, noise and pollution.

- It's the job of the local council to make changes like the one I'm suggesting. But before the council does anything, there usually needs to be some pressure from local people to bring a problem to light. So, perhaps we need a campaign by local residents who want to see this change. Then the council might contract a town planner or an architect to come up with some possible designs for a new road system.

- I'm not sure how exactly the process of creating a pedestrian street would work, but I imagine that it would require detailed planning. Perhaps a bypass would need to be built around the town centre first. This would give drivers a faster alternative to driving through the town, and it would allow the main shopping street to be blocked off and pedestrianised.

- I'd like to see this change because it would really improve the quality of life of residents in the town where I live. I can imagine the new pedestrian street having cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating. It would be a safer and more pleasant place for families to go shopping, and I'm sure this would have a positive knock-on effect on local shops and businesses.

32. IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'Prize' answer

Here's a question that I mentioned in a lesson a few weeks ago:

Describe a prize that you would like to win. You should explain

- What the prize is for
- How you know about it
- What you would have to do to win it - and why you would like to win this prize.

And here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to talk about a prize that I would like to win, which is the 'employee of the year' award at the company where I work. At the end of December each year, the company directors give this award to a member of staff who has made an outstanding contribution to the business over the previous twelve months.

- I first heard about this prize during my training and orientation period just after I got the job three years ago. It was early December and some of my colleagues were discussing who might be awarded 'employee of the year' later that month. I was intrigued, and asked them to tell me more about the award.

- As I said, the prize is given for 'outstanding contribution to the business'. We don't have an exact definition of what this means, but we assume that you have to achieve certain standards, such as 100% attendance, good punctuality, meeting targets and deadlines, good teamwork, and so on. I think the winner also needs to have done something especially creative. For example, last year's winner created a completely new service for our clients.

- I'd like to win 'employee of the year' because it would mean that my work had been recognised by the company directors, and this would definitely help me to progress in my career. It would also give me a great sense of personal achievement.

33. IELTS Speaking: 'Future aim' answer

Last month I forgot to write a sample answer for the question below.

Describe an aim or goal that you hope to achieve in the future. You should say:

- What the aim is
- When you hope to achieve it
- What you need to do to reach your goal - and why this goal is important to you.

Here's my answer. Can you find any 'less common vocabulary' in it?

- I'm going to describe a future aim of mine, which is to write a book. I'd like to write a novel, so the story or plot would be fictional, but it would probably be influenced by some of my own experiences, ideas and views.

- Unfortunately I have no idea where to start or what my novel would be about, so I can't imagine achieving this aim until later in my life. Maybe it will be something that I do as a hobby when I retire, or I might suddenly be inspired to start writing much sooner. It's just a vague objective at the moment.

- I think it must be extremely difficult to find the motivation to write a novel, so more than anything I would need time, commitment and the passion to keep working until I finished. I would probably need to set a goal of writing for a certain amount of time each day, and of course I'd need a good idea for a story in the first place.

- This goal interests me because I've always wondered how people manage to create a work of fiction from nothing; I've always wondered whether I could do the same, and whether I'd be capable of bringing a story to life. I've always enjoyed reading, and I'd like to follow in the footsteps of my favourite authors.

34. IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'Indoor game' answer

Describe an indoor game that you enjoyed as a child. You should say

- What the game was
- Where you played it

- Who played this game with you

- And why you liked it

- As a child I enjoyed playing chess. I think chess is probably the best known board game in the world. It's a game for two players, and the aim is to defeat the other player by taking his or her pieces and eventually trapping his King. This final move is called checkmate.

- I remember that it was a classmate of mine at primary school who first taught me to play chess. He had a small, portable chess set, and once I knew how each piece moved, we started playing at break and lunch times; we played in our classroom or outside on the school playground. Later my parents bought me my own chess set as a birthday present so that I could play at home.

- I taught my younger brother to play, and at some point I joined the school chess club. There I had the chance to hone my skills against some of the older pupils, and in my final year of primary school I made it onto the school team. There were five of us on the team, and we competed against children from other primary schools in the same town.

- I liked playing chess because I enjoyed the challenge of thinking ahead and trying to outwit my opponent. I was probably seven or eight years old when I started playing, and it seemed like a very mysterious and intellectual game at that time. Also, although I loved winning, chess taught me to learn from my losses and to congratulate the person who had beaten me.

35. IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'School' topic

Describe a school that you went to when you were a child. You should say

- Where the school was

- When you went there

- What the school and the teachers were like - and explain whether you enjoyed your time there.

Here's my sample (band 9) answer:

- I'm going to talk about my primary school. The school was called and it was in the town of The location of the school was great because it was within walking distance of our family home at the time. The route to school was all downhill, which made it an easy walk in the morning, but a tiring journey on the way home in the afternoon!

- I was a pupil at school between the ages of 5 and 11 - the full 6 years of primary education. From age 11 onwards, I went to a nearby secondary school.

- My primary school seemed like a big place at the time, but it was actually quite a small school, with only six classes. I remember there being a large room called the assembly hall, where the whole school gathered every morning to hear messages from the headmaster. I also remember spending a lot of time on the playground and on the sports field. I liked all of my teachers; they were caring but strict at the same time, and I think they fostered a positive and fun atmosphere in the school.

- I have really fond memories of my primary school years, mainly because of the friends I made and the fun I had. One of my most vivid memories is of performing in the school play in my final year. I had to learn lines and play the part of a character in a traditional children's story. It was a nerve-racking experience, but it felt like my first real achievement.

36. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Family celebration

Describe a family celebration that you remember. You should say

- What you were celebrating

- Who was present

- What you and your family did to make the celebration special - and why you enjoyed the occasion.

Here's my sample answer:

- I'm going to describe my sister's wedding day, which took place a few years ago in the town where I grew up. For my sister it was the biggest and most important day of her life.
- I think there were around 100 people at the marriage ceremony, which was held in a church. Even more people came to the party, or the wedding reception as we call it, after the ceremony. Of course, most members of my family were there, as well as the groom's family and a collection of the bride and groom's friends and colleagues.
- To make the celebration special, we did what families normally do. My mother made sure that the church and the reception venue were nicely decorated - there were flowers everywhere! Obviously we all dressed for the occasion, and there were bridesmaids, gifts, a huge wedding cake, and so on.
- I enjoyed the occasion because it was great to see my sister so happy on her big day. The ceremony was perfect, and we all had a fantastic time at the reception. It's rare for me to see all of my family and friends together in one place, so that's probably what made the day so memorable for me.

37. IELTS Speaking Part 2: Describe a market

Describe an open-air or street market which you enjoyed visiting. You should say:

- Where the market is
- What the market sells
- How big the market is
- And explain why you enjoyed visiting it.

Here's my description. It includes several examples of 'band 7-9' vocabulary that I took from the websites I listed in last week's lesson.

- I'm going to describe a street market that I've enjoyed visiting many times

in Manchester. It's the Manchester Christmas Market, and it comes to the city for about a month from the end of November every year. The market stalls are spread across several sites in the city centre, but the centrepiece is the large European market in Albert Square next to the Town Hall.

- The Christmas Market stalls sell an array of Christmas gifts and mouth-watering food and drink from all over Europe. It's a great place to find handmade crafts such as jewellery, ornaments, wooden toys and other souvenirs, but it's the food and drink that seem to be most popular. Probably the biggest seller is the

'Gluhwein', a hot, sweet wine which is sold in a souvenir mug.

- The market was originally quite small, occupying just one of the central squares in Manchester, but it's grown quickly in recent years, spilling over into maybe five other pedestrian streets and a few other squares. Apparently there are over 200 stalls now, so it's become a really big event attracting thousands of visitors.

- The main reason I've always enjoyed visiting the Christmas Market is the fantastic atmosphere. When I went there last December, it didn't matter how cold or wet the weather was, Manchester seemed to come alive when the market opened; the streets were bustling with people and there was a real festive feel to the city.

38. IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'Positive experience' answer

Describe a positive experience that you had as a teenager. You should say

- What the positive experience was
- Where you were
- Who you were with
- And explain why you found the experience positive.

Here's my sample answer, taking some of the ideas from this lesson.

- I'm going to describe the first time I visited England's capital city, London, on a school trip when I was a teenager. I had never been to London before, and it was great to share that experience with my school friends.
- The positive experience wasn't confined to one particular place in London. As far as I remember, I enjoyed the whole trip, from the coach journey to the visits to various tourist attractions. We got off the coach near the Houses of Parliament, and so one of my first memories was seeing the famous 'Big Ben' clock tower. We also visited the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square.
- As I said earlier, it was a school trip, and I think there were around thirty of us, including two teachers. I was with a group of close friends, which made the experience more enjoyable.
- What really struck me about London was that it was historic but modern and thriving at the same time. It seemed to me to be a lively, fashionable and cosmopolitan place. Coming from a relatively small town, the experience made me keen to visit more capital cities in the future.

Here's a list of the phrases that I think would impress an examiner:

- It was great to share that experience
- The positive experience wasn't confined to one particular place
- As far as I remember
- Visits to various tourist attractions
- One of my first memories was
- A group of close friends
- Which made the experience more enjoyable
- What really struck me about London was

- Historic but modern and thriving at the same time
- A lively, fashionable and cosmopolitan place
- Coming from a relatively small town
- The experience made me keen to visit more capital cities

39. IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'Future plans' answer

Describe a future plan which is not related to work or study. You should say

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- What the plan is
- When you thought of the plan
- Who is involved in the plan
- And say how you think you will achieve the plan.

It's interesting that the question tells you not to talk about work or study. However, we can use other easy topics that we have already prepared. For example:

- A plan to go on holiday or visit another city / country
- A plan to buy a present for someone
- A plan to start a new hobby

Here's my answer to this question:

• I'm going to talk about a future plan that I have, which is to buy a good camera and to become a better photographer. At the moment I'm just using the camera on my mobile phone, but I've realised that it has its limitations. • I thought of this plan when I was at a friend's wedding a few weeks ago. I got some great pictures of the bride and groom and their guests celebrating, but I

did notice that with my phone camera I wasn't able to capture longer range photos, or photos in darker conditions; the phone's zoom and flash aren't

very good. Next time I'd like to be able to capture a special occasion in higher quality images.

- Obviously this plan depends on whether I can save enough money to buy the camera I'd like. Also, before making a decision about which camera to get, I'll probably talk to a friend who knows more about photography than I do.

- In terms of buying a camera, I'll achieve this plan if I can save some money! In terms of becoming a better photographer, I think I'll achieve that goal by experimenting with my new camera and by learning as I go along.

Maybe you read it and understood it, but did you really notice the good language that I used? Did you note down the good vocabulary and try to use it yourself?

Good vocabulary:

- It has its limitations

- The bride and groom and their guests celebrating

- Capture longer range photos

- Photos in darker conditions

- Capture a special occasion

- Higher quality images

- Depends on whether

- I'll achieve that goal by experimenting

- Learning as I go along Grammar and coherence:

- Variety of tenses and verb forms: I'm going to talk about, I'm using, I've

realised, I thought, I'll talk, I did notice, I'd like to, before making, I'll achieve... if I can... (conditional)

- Linking and organising: which, at the moment, but, a few weeks ago, next time, obviously, this plan (referring back to a previous idea), also, in terms of
- No mistakes!

40. IELTS Speaking: Film Answer, verb tenses and vocabulary

IELTS Speaking Part 2: 'Film' answer

Here's my sample answer:

• I'm going to talk about a film that I'd like to see when it comes out later this year. It's the new James Bond film, and I saw in the news that it's going to be called 'Spectre'. I think 'Spectre' refers to the name of the imaginary criminal organisation that James Bond has to defeat in the film. • As 'Spectre' hasn't been released yet, I don't know exactly what it will be about. But I can guess that the hero, Bond, is going to be on a mission to save the world from an arch-criminal as usual. I'm sure it will be similar to most of the previous Bond films, with a plot line involving lots of twists and turns, and with Bond using his skills to defeat his nemesis in the end.

• I first heard about this film when I was watching the news a couple of months ago, and since then I've seen the official trailer on TV. There have also been various articles in newspapers discussing the actors who have been cast to play supporting roles in the film. The James Bond films are always big news here in the UK, probably because Bond himself is an English character.

- I'd like to see 'Spectre' at the cinema because I'm sure it will be full of action scenes and special effects, and I like the fact that Bond's missions always take place in spectacular locations in different parts of the world. Of course Bond films are totally unrealistic, you could even say ridiculous. But they're always fast, entertaining and fun, a bit like a roller-coaster ride!

Here are examples of different verb tenses that I used

- Future with 'going to': it's going to be called Spectre
 - Future with 'will': I don't know exactly what it will be about
 - Present simple for the future: when it comes out later this year
 - Present simple: I think Spectre refers to...
- Present perfect (active): I've seen the official trailer
- Present perfect (passive): hasn't been released yet
- Past simple: I saw in the news
 - Past continuous: when I was watching the news
- Here are some examples of 'band 7-9' vocabulary:
 - When it comes out (meaning: when it is released)
 - Refers to the name of
 - The imaginary criminal organisation
 - Hasn't been released yet
 - On a mission to save the world
 - An arch-criminal
 - A plot line involving lots of twists and turns
 - To defeat his nemesis
 - The official

trailer

- Cast to play supporting roles
- James Bond films are always big news
- Action scenes and special effects
- Take place in spectacular locations
- Unrealistic, you could even say ridiculous
- Like a roller-coaster ride

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