



ACADEMIC LISTENING TEST

The IELTS Academic listening test is one area where teachers cannot help students as much as they can in other areas. The skill of listening is one that is developed by practice and there is not much a teacher can say to improve a student's ability at it. What we can do is to give you some hints for doing the test and also show you the type of question that you will come up against when you do the test. After that, as much practice as possible is the way to improve. This practice can be doing actual IELTS practice tests or by doing any form of listening in English.

The IELTS Academic listening test is approximately 40 minutes in length and there are four sections each with a separate listening passage. In each section there are 10 questions making 40 in all. Sections 1 and 2 are based on social survival in an English speaking country and sections 3 and 4 are based on a more educational and training orientation. The actual tape lasts for about 30 minutes and then you have 10 minutes at the end of the listening in order to transfer your answers to the answer paper.

Section 1 Here you will listen to a conversation between 2 people. The conversation is divided into 2 parts. You have to answer 10 questions based on what you hear. At the start of section 1 you will have an example read out to you and then explained. This is then repeated when the listening starts properly.

Section 2 Here you will hear a monologue though it may include a second speaker asking questions in order to stimulate the monologue. The monologue is divided into 2 parts. You have to answer 10 questions based on what you hear.

Section 3 Here you will listen to a conversation between 2, 3 or 4 people. The conversation is divided into 2 parts. You have to answer 10 questions based on what you hear.

Section 4 Here you will hear a monologue though it may include a second speaker asking questions in order to stimulate the monologue. The monologue is divided into 2 parts. You have to answer 10 questions based on what you hear.

The main problem that candidates have with the IELTS Academic listening test is that the listening tape is only played once. Therefore you have to be quite quick and very alert in order to pick up the answers, write them down and be ready for the next answer. Another area where students have problems is that they are used to listening to a live speaker in front of them when they can look at the lips and the body movements. IELTS candidates listen to a tape and this is not a natural skill. As I said



above, you have to get as much practice with IELTS practice tests at this skill as possible in order to maximize your chances of getting a good band.

Marking

There are 40 questions in the IELTS Academic Listening Test and 1 mark is awarded for each correct answer. There are no half marks. Your final mark out of 40 is then converted to a band from 1 - 9 using a converting table and this band is then averaged with the other 3 parts of the test to give your final IELTS band. Band scores for the listening test and the final band are given as a whole band or a half band. The converting table used to change your mark out of 40 to the band out of 9 changes with every test. However, below you can see a rough guide that you can use to assess your practice. There is no guarantee that you will perform the same in the real test itself as the test converters vary with each test, but it can be a guide to your progress with the IELTS practice tests that you use.

IELTS Academic Listening Test Marks, Bands and Results - Rough Guide Converter

Score	Band
1	1
2-3	2
4-9	3
10-16	4
17-24	5
25-31	6
32-36	7
37-38	8
39-40	9

IELTS Academic Listening Test Question Types

In the IELTS Academic listening test the same types of question come up every time so it will help you to know what these types are. They are as follows:

multiple choice

- short answer
- sentence completion
- notes/summary/diagram/flow chart/table completion
- labeling a diagram with numbered parts
- classification
- matching lists/phrases



These question types can all be found in IELTS practice tests including the ones in IELTS Help Now IELTS practice tests question papers. As usual, practice is the key. Listening to tapes and doing the practice questions is the best possible preparation you can have.

Practice for The IELTS Academic Listening Test

There are different types of practice that you can do to improve your listening skills for the IELTS exam. The best, as I've said before, is to practice on specific IELTS practice tests. After that though there are other things. Listening to the radio is excellent as it is the same skill as the IELTS listening test - listening to a voice without the speaker(s) being present. Listening to the TV is good too but you can see the speaker. You could try turning your back to the TV as this will make it more realistic. Listening to the news on TV and radio is probably the best practice you could do with these two media. You can also see English speaking films at the cinema or at home on TV or video. All these things will develop your listening skills. In the end though, using good quality IELTS practice tests is the best strategy.

IELTS Academic Listening Test Strategies

There isn't much you can do but there some things. First of all, you get time to read the questions at the start of each section and mid-way in each section. Use this time (usually 20 seconds) wisely. You should know in advance all the questions before you hear the tape. At the end of the sections you also get some time to check your answers. Use this time to check through and then turn ahead to read the next questions in advance.

When you read the questions you can usually predict some of the types of answer that will come. For example, in section 1, if you can see that the test is asking for a telephone number, then you know you'll be listening out for numbers and the word telephone. In the later sections this becomes more complicated but the same technique can be used. Think about this when you are practising so you can develop this skill.

Tips and Ideas about the IELTS Academic Listening Test

As in all IELTS tests, the questions get harder as it goes on. You will see from your practice that the types of listening and questions that you encounter in Section 1 are more difficult in Section 2 and so on. This does not mean that by Section 4 they are impossible but they are more demanding linguistically. Beware of some questions which require a number (i.e.: a telephone number) or some letters (i.e.: a postcode) as sometimes what you think is the answer will be read out only for the speaker to correct him or her self and then say the correct answer.

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An important tip is to answer all the questions as you hear them; don't wait until later. Sometimes people in these tests hear the correct answer but decide to remember the answer and write it down later so they can wait for the next answer. This I feel is a mistake. Firstly, people will very often forget this answer and secondly, if you follow this method, you will have to remember up to 5 or 6 answers in a row before you can write them down. Then you'll forget even more.

As I said above, at the end of the test you have 10 minutes extra to transfer your answers from the question paper to the answer paper. Some people put their answers directly onto the answer paper. I feel it's better to write the answers on the question paper and use the 10 minutes given at the end for the transfer. Writing the answers on the question paper allows you to keep your concentration on the questions and, if you make a mistake, it's not so difficult to correct.

One area that students don't like is that, in the listening test, good grammar and spelling are important. The grammar part is not so important as you can't make many grammar errors in 3 words (the maximum you use in the listening test) but, if you spell something wrong, it will be marked as wrong. People think, quite rightly in my opinion, that the listening should test whether you understand what you heard and not how you spell something but these are the rules. So, be careful about your spelling!

If the question asks for no more than 3 words, use no more than 3 words. Writing 4 words is wrong. You won't be asked to do it in 3 words or less unless it is possible so don't worry; it can always be done.

Don't panic if you miss an answer. If it has really gone, then it is history. Worrying and panicking is only going to make you miss another one. One miss is probably not going to destroy your mark so calm down and listen for the next one. Sometimes you think you have missed it but you are mistaken. If you are calm and keep listening, maybe the answer will come or even be repeated.

Never leave a question unanswered; especially if it is only an A,B,C,D question or something similar. Guess if you really don't know. There are no marks taken away for wrong answers or even stupid answers. So, have a go! Logic, general knowledge or just luck might give you the right answer!

Anyway, work hard and good luck with the IELTS Academic Listening Test! I hope that this tutorial has helped you. Below are links to the other free IELTS Academic Tutorials. We strongly recommend that you practice for the tests with good IELTS practice tests. Of course, we would like you to use ours as we believe ours are excellent and the cheapest on the market, but any good IELTS practice tests will do.