



Welcome to IELTS, your ticket to study and work overseas!

In response to the growing popularity of IELTS the Taipei Times, in conjunction with the British Council, brings our readers an IELTS preparation page which will run every Saturday on p14 of the Taipei Times. Each week will focus on a different area of the test. IELTS, the International English Language Testing System, is an upper-intermediate test of English communication. It can be used for university entry and emigration around the English-speaking world and beyond. It measures your ability to communicate across the four language skills — reading, writing, listening and speaking — through authentic challenging tasks. With over 700,000 people taking IELTS annually, it is one of the fastest growing English tests in the world, trusted and accepted by over 4,000 organisations and faculties worldwide, and is a great alternative to TOEFL.

## Speaking Test: Topics

In the speaking test, the examiner will try and find out how well you are able to discuss issues other than your specialist subject. If, for example, you are studying economics, the examiner will assume you can discuss economics in depth, and may decide to ask you about interior design, or popular sports personalities in your country.

### Some common topics and example questions:

- Art and culture: Tell me about a painting you have seen.
- Wildlife: Are there any special animals that represent your country?
- Food and drink: What kind of restaurants are popular in your country these days?
- The environment: What do people do in your country to protect the environment?
- Sports: Why is basketball so popular in Taiwan?
- Education: Tell me about your high school.
- Leisure time: What is there to do at the weekend in Taipei?
- TV and film: What kind of TV shows are popular in Taiwan?
- Music: What kind of music do you like to listen to?
- Technology: How do you use technology in your job?
- Clothes and fashion: How interested are you in the latest fashions?

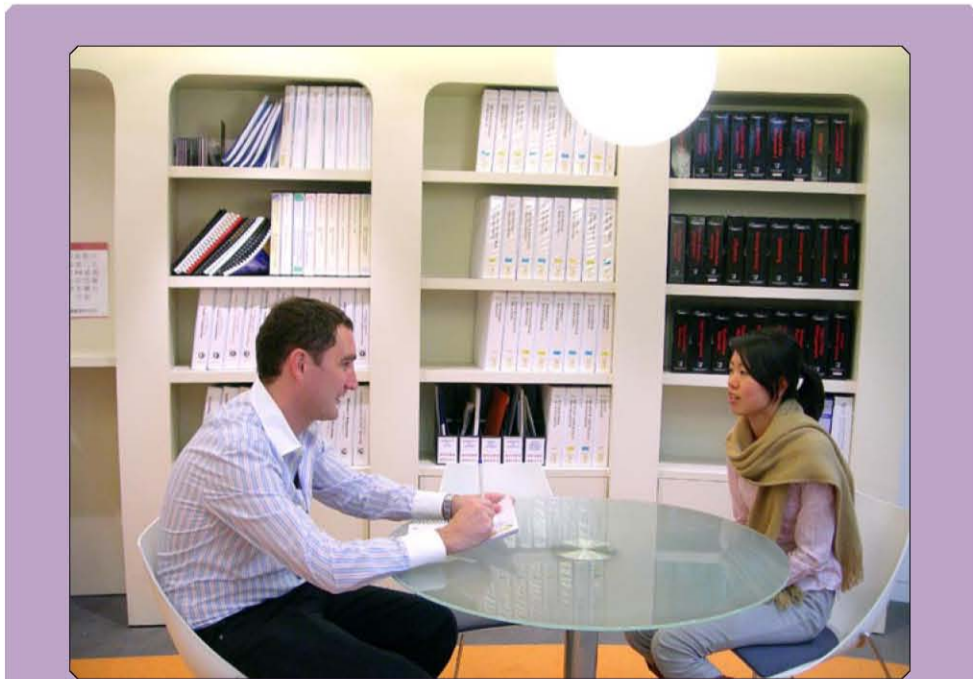
The examiner is not trying to catch you out, he or she is giving you the opportunity to display the wide range of your vocabulary. You don't need to have expert knowledge of the subject, you just have to show you can discuss common issues and give your opinions.

#### Tips:

**Be a risk taker:** the examiner will be more impressed with a wide range of vocabulary (even if some of it is wrong) than a narrow range of error-free language.

**Talk around unknown vocabulary:** All people sometimes can't think of the word they want to say. If this happens to you, try and think of another way of saying the same thing. The most important thing is to show you can express what you are thinking.

**Lie!** Feel free to lie to the examiner. He or she is not interested in the truth of what you say; he or she just wants to see a wide range of language. If for example, you have no interest in art, you could lie and say you love the work of the impressionists, as you find it refreshing, exhilarating, delightful, charming, inspired, innovative, energising and cathartic. This might make your answer more interesting.



The British Council, Taipei

PHOTO: CATHERINE THOMAS, TAIPEI TIMES

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We currently operate in 109 countries and territories and have over 70 years of experience. In Taiwan our aim is to build lasting relationships between the UK and Taiwan by connecting people with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK.

- We offer free, professional and impartial support for studying in the UK
- We organise collaborative events and exchanges in education, arts, science, and English language teaching.
- We support learners and teachers of English in Taiwan.
- We provide English language courses.
- We offer access to UK examinations — including IELTS.

CREDIT: HARRY HAYNES, BRITISH COUNCIL, TAIPEI

## SPEAKING PART 1: 4-5 MINUTES

In this section you have to answer questions about everyday topics. These will mostly be about you and where you come from. Look at these example questions and two students' answers, Jackson and Beyoncé. Which answers do you think are more impressive?



PHOTO: CATHERINE THOMAS, TAIPEI TIMES

### Topic: Wildlife

#### Jackson

- Q: What kind of wild animals are there in your country?  
A: Dog and cat.  
Q: How do people feel about these animals?  
A: It's cute.

#### Beyoncé

- Q: What kind of wild animals are there in your country?  
A: Well, there are a variety of interesting species which can be found in mountainous areas. There are a lot of types of insects which grow very large because of the sub-tropical conditions, such as mantises and a lot of other bugs I don't know the names of in English, and there are also a lot of mammals, such as the famous Taiwanese black bear.  
Q: How do people feel about these animals?  
A: To be honest, most people think the insects are pests, although they are obviously important in the food chain. But people are very fond of the black bears, which they feel represent Taiwan, and there is a lot of conservation work being done to protect their habitats.

### Topic: Clothes and fashion

#### Jackson

- Q: Are there any traditional ways of dressing in your country?  
A: Er... I don't know how to say it in English.  
Q: How popular are these clothes with young people?  
A: No one will wear it. It's too old.

#### Beyoncé

- Q: Are there any traditional ways of dressing in your country?  
A: The most well-known outfit for women is called a qipao. It's a kind of tight-fitting silk dress. It looks quite sexy.  
Q: How popular are these clothes with young people?  
A: Qipaos are still worn by some people. They are quite fashionable in other countries too. But apart from that, I don't think traditional ways of dressing are as common in Taiwan as in some other countries, like Japan and Korea.

### Topic: Leisure time

#### Jackson

- Q: Tell me about some popular leisure-time activities in your country.  
A: Sleeping. And watching movies and going shopping.  
Q: Why is going to the movies so popular?  
A: You can get the latest information.

#### Beyoncé

- Q: Tell me about some popular leisure-time activities in your country.  
A: Apart from shopping and going to the movies, lots of people like walking in the mountains around Taipei. There are also several hot spring resorts near the city, such as Wulai, which are very popular at the weekends.  
Q: Why is walking in the mountains so popular?  
A: Let me think. I guess it's because people's lives in Taipei can be quite stressful, but the city is surrounded by mountains and forest. For example, there is Yangmingshan and Elephant Mountain. People can go to these places quite easily when they have a day off and get some exercise and fresh air, and also enjoy the beautiful scenery.

Jackson's answers are very weak because:

- He hasn't really answered the first question, which is about wild animals.
- He has displayed a very limited range of vocabulary.
- His answers are too short.
- When he doesn't know a word, he gives up.
- His answers could be about anywhere. He doesn't explain anything special about his country.

Beyoncé's answers are strong because:

- She's taken time to think about the question and give full answers.
- She's shown she knows a lot of less common vocabulary.
- She's mentioned lots of examples.
- She hasn't stopped when unable to think of a particular word.
- She has explained the meaning of Chinese words.
- We learn a lot of interesting information about Taiwan from her.

Check out these websites for more speaking practice:

- Information about all sections of the test:  
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/taiwan-exams-ielts.htm>
- Lots of example questions:  
<http://www.writefix.com/ieltspkg/>
- Information on the speaking test:  
<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/ielts/speaking/index.htm>