

CREDIT: HARRY HAYNES, BRITISH COUNCIL, TAIPEI



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.

IELTS Speaking

- ▶ 14 minutes
- ▶ Three parts
- ▶ Part one: Answer questions about yourself and where you come from
- ▶ Part two: Speak on your own for one to two minutes - one minute to prepare
- ▶ Part three: Answer questions related to the part two topic
- ▶ You are graded on fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation

Topics: Culture

In the speaking test, you are often asked to discuss topics related to culture.

In part one of the test, you may be asked to describe customs, traditional arts, music, or festivals that you like or that are popular in your country.

Example question:

What kind of music is popular in your country?

This question is giving you the chance to display your wide range of vocabulary. If you just answer 'pop music' you are missing a great opportunity to impress the examiner. If you try and mention a variety of different genres you will come across as being able to discuss the topic with ease.

Think about:

- ▶ Music popular with different age groups – classical, easy listening, jazz
- ▶ Different fashions in music – hip hop, dance music, heavy metal
- ▶ Music in the past – rock and roll, folk music
- ▶ How the music sounds – exciting, monotonous, relaxing
- ▶ Locally produced music and foreign music
- ▶ Examples of bands



Example answer:

'I personally like rock bands like Linkin Park, although most of my friends like hip-hop music from the states, and R&B, although I think it's a bit soft. A lot of people also like Taiwanese pop stars as well, like Jolin. We also have Taiwanese Aborigine folk music, and a lot of old people like 'yenge' which they sing on karaoke machines, but it's a bit dated and not many young people really listen to that kind of thing.'



Gold Seal perform a number.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF ADAM MALSTER

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.

SPEAKING PART 2

You may be asked to describe a cultural event or place you have been to, for example a museum, a festival or a concert. You have one minute to prepare, and have to talk for between one and two minutes. The examiner will give you a pencil and some paper to make notes while you prepare. You should make whatever kind of notes you find useful — they could be in English or Chinese — but you may find the ideas below useful.

Most tasks contain two main parts: describe the topic you have chosen, and explain your feelings about it. To do well, you have to include both.

Tips: Making Notes

- ▶ Read the task card carefully – if you don't understand any part of it, ask the examiner.
- ▶ Think of something to describe as quickly as you can.
- ▶ Brainstorm related vocabulary you can use to describe it.
- ▶ Make notes under all the headings.
- ▶ Just write down keywords which you can talk about (you don't have time to write full sentences)

Tips: Speaking

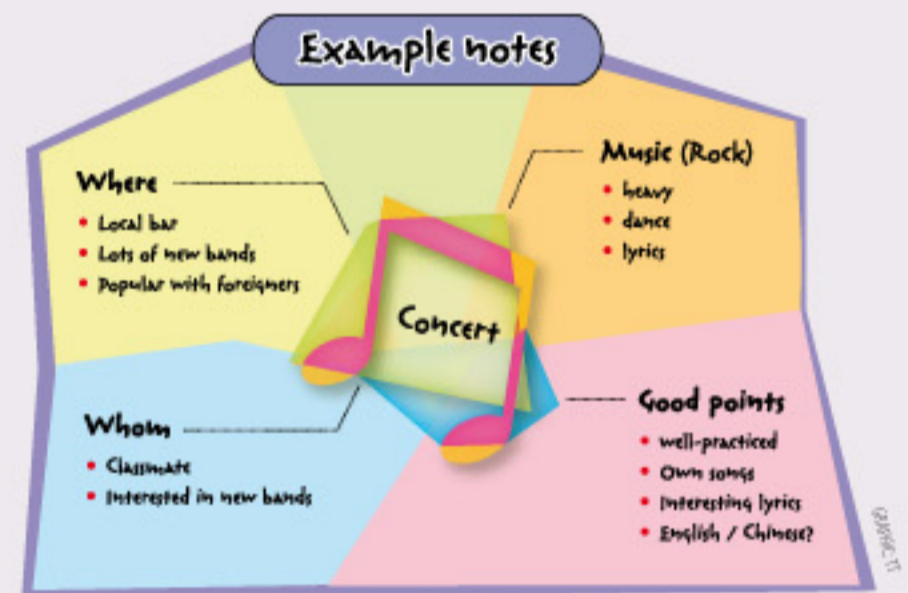
- ▶ Talk directly to the examiner – you and the examiner will both feel more involved and you will be more confident.
- ▶ If you make a mistake, it's okay to correct yourself.
- ▶ If you forget one word, try to use other words to describe what you mean.
- ▶ Talk about all the points mentioned on the task card – students often stop talking before the time is up without having given a full answer.
- ▶ Try to keep going for the full two minutes, but if you have talked for more than one and a half minutes and feel you have said enough, you can tell the examiner you have finished.

Example Part 2 Task

Describe a music concert you have seen. And explain how you felt about it.

You should say:

- ▶ What kind of music it was
- ▶ Where and when it took place
- ▶ Whom you saw it with



Sample answer

Examiner: Alright Duke, remember you have two minutes for this, so don't worry if I stop you. I'll tell you when the time is up.

Duke: OK.

Examiner: Could you start now please?

Duke: Right, I'd like to talk about a gig I saw a few weeks ago. It was by a local band called Gold Seal. They basically play heavy rock music, although it's quite varied. Some of their songs are more like dance music. I saw them in a bar near where I live, Bliss, which has a lot of new local bands. It's quite popular with foreigners, but there were a lot of Taiwanese people there, too. I went with one of my classmates from university; he's quite into that kind of music and so goes to a lot of gigs in Taipei to see local indie bands. It was the first time I had seen the band, but I personally thought it was a really good performance. The band played together really well and had obviously practised a lot. They played all their own songs, and there were some interesting lyrics – one song, for example was about killing mosquitoes. My friend thought it was pretty good, too. He doesn't speak English very well though, so he prefers to see bands who sing in Chinese. He also said that the singer should ...

Examiner: Thank you Duke. Would you like to go to a similar concert again?

Duke: Yeah, sure. I always enjoy going out, listening to new music and meeting new people.

Grammar note:

When you are describing a place you have been to, you can use past or present tenses. For example:

I went to the British Museum. It was great. (Past simple)
I saw the Egyptian collection. It's amazing. (Present simple)

If you talk in the past tense, you are focusing on your experience of the place. If you use the present, you are focussing on the place itself, which is still there.

Key Music Vocab:

- ▶ Musical genre – a type or style
- ▶ Gig – an informal word for rock concert
- ▶ Into rock music – to like rock music
- ▶ Indie – independent bands
- ▶ Lyrics – the words to a song