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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

- 11-14 minutes
- Three parts
- Part 1: Answer questions about yourself and where you come from
- Part 2: Take one minute to prepare, and then speak for one to two minutes.
- Part 3: Answer questions related to the part 2 topic
- You are graded on fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation

Speaking part 2

This is called the long turn. You are given a card with a topic on it and paper and a pencil for making notes. You have one minute to think before you give your answer.

Tips before you speak

- ▶ Read the question very carefully. Note any keywords.
- ▶ Make sure you read all parts of the question. There are usually four parts and you should try and answer them all.
- ▶ Decide on something to talk about quickly. This will give you more time to plan.
- ▶ Use the scrap paper to write down keywords that you can talk about — you do not have time to write full sentences.

Tips while you are speaking

- ▶ Remember to think about tense. For example, if you are describing an event in the past, most of what you say should be in the past tense.
- ▶ If you make a mistake, it is OK to correct yourself, but do not worry too much if you make one or two mistakes. Communicating your ideas effectively is the most important thing.
- ▶ Try to keep speaking for the full two minutes if you can. It is OK to stop after one minute if you have said all you want, but try and use the opportunity to display your language skills.
- ▶ Remember to answer the whole question if you have time — students often stop early without having answered the question fully.



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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.

EXAMPLE PART 2 TASK

Describe a sports event you enjoyed watching.

You should say

- ▶ What kind of event it was
- ▶ Where and when you saw the event
- ▶ Whom you were with

And explain why you enjoyed it so much



PHOTO: MICHAEL KEARNEY, TAIPEI TIMES

Answer one

Look at the following answer. How many things can you find that are wrong with it?

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

Iverson: OK.

Examiner: Could you start now please?

Iverson: The event I choose is the NBA. I watch the event in my home on TV. Sometimes I watch it with my friends. It is very exciting, so I can relax myself. I enjoy it because... it's so exciting... er... sometimes I also watch baseball. It is very popular because of one player from Taiwan. He is Wang Chien-ming. He plays for the Yankees. Every Taiwanese person can see him and wants to achieve what he has done. Er... one day I would like to go to New York and see his team play. If I go there I will also be able to travel around the US and do some sightseeing. Er... right now I don't have money for this, but, er... is that enough?

Examiner: Thank you Iverson, that's fine. Would you like to watch a similar sports event again?

Iverson: Yeah, what? The NBA or baseball?

Examiner: Well, either.

Iverson: Yes.

Problems

- Iverson has not read the question properly. It is supposed to be one event, i.e., one game or competition, not an on-going league.
- Iverson's description is all in the present tense when he has been asked to describe a past event.
- Iverson hasn't planned properly, so he uses a very limited vocabulary and runs out of things to say very quickly.
- He doesn't fully answer the question — he doesn't explain what the NBA is or spend much time explaining why he enjoys it.
- Because he hasn't described the first event in any detail, he starts to describe a second event and then goes completely off the topic talking about his own future plans.
- He doesn't talk for long enough.

Answer two

Now look at this answer. Why is it better?

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

Kobe: OK.

Examiner: Could you start now please?

Kobe: Thanks. I'd like to talk about a football match that I saw last week between Croatia and Germany in the Euro 2008 football championship. It's not well known in Taiwan, so I watched the game online on a live stream at my friend's house — he's really into football. It was very late at night because of the time difference — the game was played in Austria. As I said, I was with my friend, and another one of our classmates also came over to watch.

I don't really follow football normally, but I really enjoyed the game because it was so close. Germany are the more famous team, so we were very excited that the underdog, Croatia, managed to play so well. The atmosphere was really good because there were thousands of supporters from both countries singing songs and waving flags.

The game was very close, but eventually Croatia went two goals ahead. Germany got a consolation goal at the end, but Croatia's defence was too tough for them to get an equaliser. The Germans were obviously very disappointed, but the Croatian supporters were over the moon.

So anyway, I didn't know much about either team before I watched the match, but I really enjoyed it because of the great atmosphere and because it was so close right to the end. I'm hoping to see more games next week when...

Examiner: Thank you Kobe, that's two minutes. Would you like to watch a similar sports event again?

Kobe: Absolutely. As I was about to say, I'm hoping to follow the rest of the tournament online.

Examiner: Thanks. Moving on to part 3...

Kobe's answer is much better because he has chosen a real event and given a personal response to each section of the question. He has also used tenses correctly and tried to use a wide range of vocabulary.

Top tip

Remember, in the exam you have to talk about things you are interested in. If you are interested in a particular sport or have any other hobbies or interests, make sure you have all the vocabulary you need to describe it in detail.

UK sports vocabulary

Find these expressions and vocabulary in Kobe's answer. Match them to their most likely meaning.

- | | | |
|------------------|---|-----|
| 1. Match | A. The team with less chance of winning | 7.E |
| 2. Underdog | B. People who try to stop the other team from scoring | 6.F |
| 3. Supporters | C. Game | 5.B |
| 4. Consolation | D. Something that helps relieve the pain of losing | 4.D |
| 5. Defence | E. Extremely happy | 3.G |
| 6. Equaliser | F. A goal that makes the game level | 2.A |
| 7. Over the moon | G. Fans | 1.C |

Answers