

CREDIT: HARRY HAYNES, THE BRITISH COUNCIL, TAIPEI



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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.

Listening: Key facts

- ▶ 30 minutes + 10 minutes to transfer your answers
- ▶ Four sections
- ▶ 40 questions in total



A lunch vendor serves a whale meat curry lunch box to customers at a vending van in Tokyo on Nov. 29, 2007. PHOTO: AFP

Preparation tips

In the test you will hear both dialogues and monologues in academic and non-academic situations. You will also hear speakers with various different accents — from across the UK, Australasia, North America and so on. Because of this, you need to listen to a wide variety of different kinds of English as it is spoken. Apart from just working through practice tests, listening to documentaries (National Geographic, Discovery), lifestyle shows (Travel and Living) and current affairs programmes (BBC, CNN, ICRT) will also help you attune yourself to different accents and improve your general listening skills.

Example task type: sentence completion

For this type of task, you have to complete sentences which summarise the recording, and complete the gaps with actual words that you hear in the dialogue.

Before the recording starts, you will have about one minute to read through the questions. During this time:

- ▶ Think about what kind of word(s) would fit grammatically. For example, a noun, a verb or an adjective etc.
- ▶ Think about what kind of information you need to listen out for. For example, a date, a name, or a location.
- ▶ If possible, try and guess answers. This will help you focus on the key points during the listening.



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ABOUT LISTENING TEST

Example task:

▶ Section 3

A discussion between two to four people in an educational context.

Complete the sentences below. Write no more than three words for each answer.

▶ Curry in Britain: Notes

1. Curry has replaced _____ as Britain's favourite dish.
2. The first curry recipe in the UK was published in a cookery book in _____.
3. Early curry dishes contained no _____.
4. The first _____ in the UK was opened by Dean Mahomet in the 18th century.
5. The _____ halted early interest in Indian food.
6. In the 1950s, Indian food started to become popular with _____ who wanted to try something different.
7. Most restaurants create a _____ from which they make other dishes.
8. One popular Indian dish in the UK was actually invented in _____.
9. Dishes with _____ sauces are popular in the UK.
10. Dishes containing _____ or vegetables are a healthier option.



An Indian chef holds the Bollywoder Burner, supposedly the world's hottest curry, in London on July 9, 2008. PHOTO: EPA

▶ **Listening Section 3:** Dialogue (if possible, get two friends to read this out for added realism)

Two students, Charlene and Nigel, are discussing a lecture that was part of a course they are studying on nutrition. Nigel was unable to go to the lecture, so he is asking about it.

Nigel: Today's lecture sounded really interesting. I wish I'd been able to go.
Charlene: Don't worry. I made plenty of notes, so I can go over the main points with you.
Nigel: Great! So, it was about Indian food, right?
Charlene: Partly, yes. Professor Singh gave us a lot of information about the history of curry in British culture. It's now seen as quite a central part of food in this country.
Nigel: That's right. I heard somewhere that it's now more popular than fish and chips.
Charlene: Yes. Well Professor Singh started by telling us about the history of Indian food in the UK. It goes back a lot further than you think. Apparently, the first known recipe for curry was published in 1747 in a book called *The Art of Cookery*. It was a bit different to the curry we eat today though, as it didn't contain any chilli.
Nigel: Why not?
Charlene: Er... oh here it is. The chilli plant wasn't introduced to India until the late fifteenth century, so I guess it hadn't really caught on back then. Anyway, in the early eighteenth century, the first known Indian restaurant was opened in London by a man called Dean Mahomet.
Nigel: So people in Britain have been eating curry since then?
Charlene: Not really. The popularity of Indian food was ended by the First World War. People were just interested in having enough to eat. It was after the Second World War that curry houses started to get really popular with working class people who wanted to try something exotic. That's what led to curry becoming as popular as it is today.
Nigel: Great. So that's the history. But didn't he talk about how healthy it is? It was a lecture on nutrition after all.
Charlene: Yeah, I'm just getting to that. Well, obviously the quality of the food depends on the restaurant, but basically most of the ingredients are fairly healthy. Most restaurants make a common base sauce, which they add different ingredients to make various dishes. The base usually contains onions, garlic, tomatoes, fresh ginger and lots of spices are added depending on the recipe.
Nigel: That all sounds fairly healthy to me. So I guess I can enjoy chicken tikka masala without having to worry about my weight.
Charlene: Well, it's not quite as simple as that. A lot of the recipes popular here have been adapted to suit British tastes. Chicken tikka masala, for example, was apparently invented by a chef from Bengal in Glasgow for customers who wanted a sauce with their chicken tikka.
Nigel: No way!
Charlene: Yes. Anyway, Indian food here generally contains a lot more meat than the original dishes, and the most popular curries tend to be ones with very creamy sauces. So if you're worried about your waistline, try and stick to less fattening sauces and vegetarian dishes or ones containing lean meat. That's actually a very healthy diet.
Nigel: Got it. Now I can pig out on Indian food every night and not gain a pound!
Charlene: Er...

- Answers:
1. fish and chips
 2. 1747
 3. chilli
 4. Indian restaurant
 5. First World War
 6. working class people
 7. common base sauce
 8. Glasgow
 9. (very) creamy
 10. lean meat

The IELTS listening exam is difficult, and you need to practice as much as possible to give you the chance to succeed. Listening to IELTS practice exam materials is one thing, but you should also be listening to other sources of English as often as possible to become more familiar with the spoken language. As your listening improves, so too will your speaking.

▶ For more information on curry in the UK, check out these websites:

- ▶ <http://www.hub-uk.com/interesting/curry-history.html>
- ▶ History of curry
- ▶ <http://www.menmagazine.co.uk/book/curryhistory.html>
- ▶ The origins of curry (Is it really English?)
- ▶ <http://www.curryhouse.co.uk/scene/index.html>
- ▶ The UK curry scene

