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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

- ▶ 11-14 minutes
- ▶ 3 parts

Part 1
Answer questions about yourself and where you come from.

Part 2
Speak on your own for one to two minutes. You have one minute to prepare.

Part 3
Answer questions related to the Part 2 topic.

▶ You are graded on fluency, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.



This canal boat on the Elblag Canal in Poland, on July 17, 2008, would provide a unique travel opportunity. PHOTO: AFP

Key Language: Tenses

One area of difficulty for students is tenses. In the test, you often have to talk about past events, your current life and your plans and predictions for the future. Look at the extracts from a student's answers in Part 1 of the speaking test.

Practice task 1

He is talking about his work and study plans. Which sentences are about the future?

1. I'm planning to study art and design in London next year.
2. I'm going to rent a flat with other students.
3. I'm working part-time in an advertising agency.
4. I think it'll be a growth industry in Taiwan.
5. I'm meeting a university representative next week.
6. I'm not sure what I'll do if I don't get on the course I want. I suppose I'll just keep preparing and apply the following year.
7. If I had more money, I would go to the UK this September.

Which sentence(s) ...

- i) makes a future prediction?
- ii) introduce general future plans?
- iii) introduces a future arrangement with a set time?
- iv) introduces an impossible or unlikely future intention?
- v) makes a decision at the time of speaking?

As you can see, there are a lot of different ways of discussing the future, and high level speakers choose different ways of discussing the future depending on how certain they are about the future event and their relationship to it.

Practice task 2

Look at these definitions of SOME ways of talking about the future, and match them to the examples.

1. Will used to make predictions.

2. Going to used to talk about general plans that have been made before the time of speaking.

3. Present continuous for fixed future plans that have been made before the time of speaking.

A. We'll probably use much more environmentally friendly vehicles in the future.

B. I don't know when I'm gonna get married.

C. I think living in another country will be really interesting.

D. I'm taking the test in two weeks.

E. I'm meeting my friends for a drink on Friday.

F. I'm going to try and get a good job when I graduate.

Other useful expressions:

I'm hoping to study at Oxford.

I'm thinking of doing a Ph.D.

I might try and work overseas to get more experience.

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EXAM PRACTICE: 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 if you want to. You have 60 seconds to think before you give your answer.

Describe an interesting journey you would like to make.

▶ You should say:

Where you would go.

How you would travel.

What you would do on the journey.

And explain why you think it would be interesting.

TIPS: Before you speak

- ▶ Pick something to talk about straight away.
- ▶ Make notes of keywords to help you remember what to talk about.
- ▶ Remember to answer all parts of the prompt.
- ▶ Think about what tense to use when you speak.

Look at these two answers. Which one is better? Why?

Sample answer one: Jackson

Examiner: OK Jackson. You had 60 seconds to prepare. Could you start speaking now please?

Jackson: Sure. I'd like to talk about a journey my friends and I are planning to make in Taiwan. We're going to take one week, and travel around the whole country. We're going to start by taking the Taroko Express to Hualien. It's a new tourist train that takes you near Taroko Gorge. We'd like to stay in Taroko Gorge for one or two nights to enjoy the spectacular scenery. Then we're going to travel to the south. I'm not sure if we'll take a bus or train, we could also fly, but anyway, we want to visit Taitung. From there, we'd like to visit Green Island and do some diving or snorkelling. It'd be great to go there for a few days, but I think it would be a bit difficult to fit into a week's trip, so we'll have to see how much time we have. After Taitung, we'll keep moving round the coast to Kenting, which has some good beaches and places to eat. I guess we'll have to stay in a budget hotel, although it would be nice to stay in one of the 5-star resorts...

Sample answer two: Duggie

Examiner: So Duggie, remember you have two minutes for this. Could you start now please?

Duggie: Yeah. My friends and I will go to Thailand. We will fly to Bangkok. It is an interesting city. We will stay in Bangkok for two days, and we will go sight-seeing. Then, we will take a train to the south of Thailand. The train will be overnight, so we will sleep on the train. I think it will be a lot of fun to travel that way. Then we will take a boat to one of the islands in the south. I can't remember what the names of the islands are, but my friend has been there before and he says we will really have a good time. We will go diving and we will see sharks and amazing fish. We will stay there for maybe four or five days, and then we will fly back from one of the islands which has an airport. I think it will be really great to travel through Thailand and see the beautiful scenery and experience a different culture...

Both students' journeys sound very interesting, but Duggie uses a very limited range of language (will) to talk about the future which makes his answer quite repetitive. Jackson uses lots of different future forms to show how certain he is about different events, showing a really good grammatical range. Because of this, Jackson's answer will get a higher score.



This high-altitude aircraft, seen in Mojave, California, on 28 July 2008, will enable commercial space travel and could be the future of travel. PHOTO: EPA

Practice task 2

- i) 4
- ii) 1 and 2
- iii) 5
- iv) 7
- v) 6

Practice task 1

They are all about the future apart from number 3

Answers:

1. A, C
2. B, F
3. D, E