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Upper intermediate IELTS (Academic stream)

Subject code:	IELTS1001
Teaching week 1:	Understanding the IELTS exam: English for Academic Purposes (Upper intermediate stream)
Commences Monday:	9 January 2017
Presenter:	Dr. Jay Jericho

1. Welcome message

Welcome colleagues to teaching week 1: Course introduction.

Each week, the course will follow the ordered structure of this template, which includes the 11 sections contained in these lecture notes.

So far, we have 9 participants registered in this course. We also have two tutors: Dr. Jay Jericho from Sydney, Australia and Dr. Conchita Gomez from Miami, Florida.

This subject uses American English. Per IELTS's examination policy, it is acceptable to use British English and American English for the IELTS exam.

The course materials for this unit are uploaded at these two websites:

<http://www.thefreeschool.education/free-diploma.html>

<http://www.thefreeschool.education/ielts.html>

New course materials shall be updated on this website over the next twelve weeks.

Please check this website once per week to keep abreast of these resources.

2. **Miscellaneous announcements relevant to the course.**

The IELTS General exam and IELTS Academic exam offer the same test content for the speaking and listening assessment components. To confirm this claim, you may refer to this official source published by IELTS (2017, NP):

There are two types of the IELTS test: IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. Listening and Speaking are the same for both tests, but the subject matter of the Reading and Writing components differs depending on which test you take.

Reference:

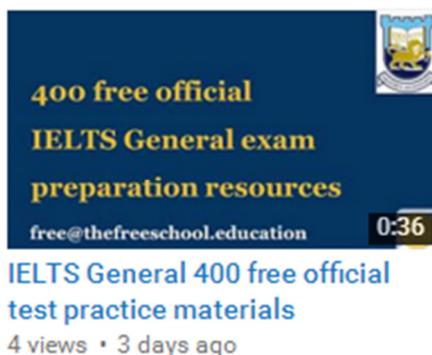
IELTS (2017), Test format,

<<https://www.ielts.org/about-the-test/test-format>>. Accessed 8 January 2017.

3. **Discuss questions asked by the cohort**

Some participants have stated that they have read/reviewed the 400 free official IELTS resources that have been published by the School on YouTube and our free official IELTS resources webpage at:

<http://www.thefreeschool.education/ielts.html>



Furthermore, these same people have asked if there will be additional open-access learning resources listed in this course. The answer to this question is “yes”. For example, other resources shall be listed in the course notes during some teaching weeks, such as the 22-page official IELTS preparation guide listed in the next section.

4. **List open-access scholarly material for the current week**

Please visit the open-access official IELTS resources listed in sections 1 to 3 above. There are in excess of 400 free official IELTS materials. These resources offer introductory information about the IELTS exam. These details include information about the structure, content and grading system of this global test. Other resources offer exam preparation and exam practice material.

Please visit the web links shown in the first three sections above. It is not possible to read all of these 400 resources in one week and most participants will struggle to review half of these materials over the next 12 teaching weeks. These resources have been

ordered into six main sections. This classification aims to assist you to identify which resources are most relevant for your unique needs. These six sections are:

1. Advice about the structure of the IELTS exam
2. Advice about IELTS's scoring system
3. General advice about how to prepare for the IELTS examination
4. Technical advice about how to answer exam questions
5. Exam question examples
6. Examples of exam answers provided by test-takers.

You are encouraged to download this free IELTS digital exam preparation guide published by official IELTS partner IDP Australia:

<https://www.ieltsessentials.com/global/prepare/supporttools>

IDP Australia (2017), IELTS support tools: Helping you get ready for test day, Sydney, Australia: IDP Australia.

5. **Summarize the previous teaching week**

This section is not relevant as this is teaching week 1. Some participants may find it useful to review some or all of The Free School's online English for Academic Purposes (EAP) upper intermediate course. The full contents of this course are available at the following two links.

<http://chat.thefreeschool.education/forum86.html>

<http://www.thefreeschool.education/free-diploma.html>

There are some brief discussions of the IELTS exam in this course. The subject matter and structure of this EAP course contains much overlap with this course:

Week 1: Introduction to principles of academic learning

Week 2: Speaking - pronunciation and contexts

Week 3: Speaking - academic applications

Week 4: Reading - grammar principles

Week 5: Reading - academic applications

Week 6: Listening - pronunciation and contexts

Week 7: Listening - academic applications

Week 8: Writing - grammar principles

Week 9: Writing - academic applications

Week 10: Assessments and English language skills

Week 11: Academic referencing and English language skills

Week 12: Course summary and review

You may visit these topics at any time during and after this course. You are also welcome to post discussions on the EAP notice board at any time. Our tutors check this board during business hours on working days (Monday to Friday).

6. Introductory discussion to the topic

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) may refer to an organization or the global examination that is developed and administered by this organization. This organization is a joint venture and its global language exam was born in 1989. Members of this collaboration include Cambridge University, the British Council and IDP Education Australia. The IELTS assessment is the most popular English language exam in terms of the number of persons who take this test. In recent years, around 2.7 million people have taken this examination annually in around 120 countries (IELTS, 2011, p. 4; 2017). This number continues to grow annually, as the IELTS exam grows in popularity in the United States and Canada.

The IELTS organization administers two versions of this global examination - the General version and the Academic version (IDP Australia, 2017). The General test is mostly taken by those who need to demonstrate their English language competency skills to potential employers. The Academic exam is mostly taken by those who require their English language proficiency to be assessed by academic institutions, professional registration bodies and immigration authorities who issue skilled work visas.

Additional references:

IELTS, (2011), *Annual Review 2011*, London, England: IELTS.

IELTS, (2017), *History of IELTS*,
<http://www.ielts.org/researchers/history_of_ielts.aspx>. Accessed 8 January 2017.

7. YouTube presentations to support the introduction

IDP Australia

“IELTS Academic or General Training: Which do you need?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CRnpLpTkUM>

1 minute 52 seconds

IELTS from IDP Education

“Doing IELTS on a budget? Here are some free support tools to help you prepare”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovT41Ryd968>

1 minute 55 seconds

IELTS from IDP Education

“Are there IELTS support tools I can access?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsLKp9yOXJQ&list=PLsuhejYkZ347XUsg-NaPNei7kX7gEyrE&index=12>

1 minute 11 seconds

8. Topic discussion - further detail

There are four English language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. IELTS and other popular English language testing systems such as the Pearson test examine and grade an examinee’s reading, writing, listening and speaking skills using their own grading system.

This course is designed for those who aim to develop their English language skills at the level known as ‘upper intermediate’ among those who study and teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This course is also useful for those whose English language skills are currently in the intermediate range.

Before I define the terms ‘intermediate’ and ‘upper intermediate’ it is useful to provide a brief overview of the IELTS scoring system and the terminologies used by the IELTS organization to grade an examinee’s English language skills. I refer to the following official websites that summarize IELTS’s scoring system. Note that a score awarded for a language skills test is referred to as a ‘band’. A ‘band’ is also used to grade an examinee’s overall performance for one language skills (*e.g.* reading) and to grade their overall performance for all four language skills. For example, if you are awarded a score of 7 for your listening tests, this will be referred to as ‘band 7’ on your IELTS score card.

References:

“IELTS scoring in detail: overall band descriptors”

<https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/ielts-scoring-in-detail>

“IELTS writing task 1 band descriptors”

http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/IELTS_task_1_Writing_band_descriptors.pdf

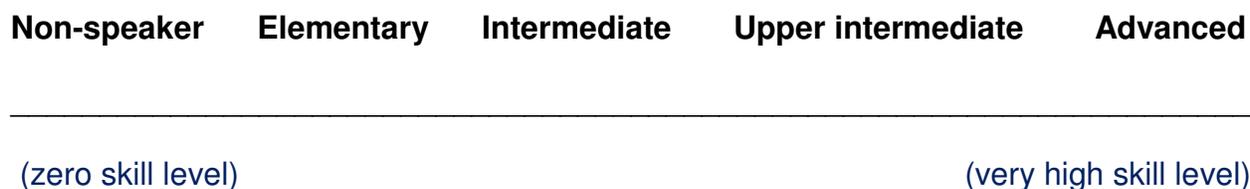
“IELTS writing task 2 band descriptors”

http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/IELTS_task_2_Writing_band_descriptors.pdf

“IELTS speaking band descriptors”

http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/Speaking%20Band%20descriptors_0.pdf

Many persons who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refer to themselves as non-speakers, beginner/elementary, intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced speakers of the English language. These skill levels are shown on the continuum diagram below:



Some participants in this course have most likely classified themselves as a member of one of the five classifications shown above and do not have a detailed knowledge of the IELTS's scoring system. For this reason, it is useful to reconcile these classification terminologies to IELTS's scoring system.

Table 1 (on the next page) maps these two classification systems. Note that this classification system is my personal opinion and it is not referenced to an official source. Drawing on my EFL training at university level and my experience as an EFL and IELTS language teacher, I argue that this classification system is mostly similar and in some cases identical to the opinions of other experienced EFL teachers who have a good knowledge of the IELTS. You may disregard this system if you do not find it useful. This knowledge is not required for any person who sits the IELTS exam.

Table 1
Mapping EFL classifications to IELTS band scores

EFL classification	IELTS classification
Non-speaker	Bands 0, 1
Elementary	Bands 2, 3, 4
Intermediate	Band 5
Upper intermediate	Bands 6 and 7
Advanced	Band 8 and 9

This course is designed for those who wish to achieve an IELTS band score of 6.0 or higher for each English language skill. Table 2 places these band scores into a global context by summarizing the minimum IELTS scores required for admission into an undergraduate and graduate Bachelor Degree course in three countries and for skilled immigration visa purposes in the same three countries.

Table 2
Minimum IELTS scores for international applicants

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Skilled work visa
University of Toronto	“The minimum requirement is an overall band of 6.5, with no band below 6.0.”		Varies between 6.0 and 7.5 for most employment categories. (Canadian Government)
University of Sydney	“The University's standard IELTS requirement is an overall score of 6.5 with no band below 6.0; however some faculties and courses have different requirements.”		7.0 for most employment categories. (Australian Government)
London School of Economics	“IELTS academic test with a score of 7.0 in all four components.”	“Varies between 6.0 and 7.0 for each skill depending on the Degree and discipline.”	At least 7.0 for each language skill (British Government)

Data sources:

Australian Government (2017), Which English language tests are accepted by the Department?,

<https://www.border.gov.au/Lega/Lega/Form/Immi-FAQs/aelt>

British Government (2017), Find out which score you need for your visa,

<https://iraq.britishcouncil.org/en/exam/ielts-uk-visa-immigration/scores>

Canadian Government (2017), Language testing - Skilled immigrants (Express Entry),

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/language-testing.asp>

London School of Economics (2017), English language requirements,

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/informationForInternationalStudents/englishLanguage.aspx>

University of Sydney (2017), English language requirements,

<http://sydney.edu.au/study/admissions/apply/entry-requirements/english-language-requirements.html>

University of Toronto (2017), English language requirements,

<http://www.future.utoronto.ca/apply/english-language-requirements>

9. **Instructions for how to proceed after reading the tutor's notes**

Please watch the YouTube presentations listed above. If these do not appeal to you, then you may ignore the presentation.

Please familiarize yourself with the course readings listed in the subsections above. I suggest that you prioritize reading this booklet:

IDP Australia (2017), IELTS support tools: Helping you get ready for test day, Sydney,

Australia: IDP Australia.

<https://www.ieltsessentials.com/global/prepare/supporttools>

This booklet provides a succinct overview of the IELTS examination and it uses simple, well organized diagrams to do this. It is important that you have a good understanding of the broad requirements of the IELTS exam before we commence teaching weeks 2 and beyond. In future weeks we look at individual language skills and specific requirements of the different types of exam questions.

10. **Discussion questions set by the tutor**

Which discussions and resources (including the YouTube presentations) contained in the notes above did find most useful? Explain why you found these useful.

What IELTS exam preparation resources do you suggest that the School adds to its IELTS website and the course notes for IELTS1001? Explain why you need to have access to these materials.

Rank from 1 to 4 what you consider to be the easiest and most difficult English language skill with reference to your own skillset.

11. **Discussion and questions put forward by participants.**

I look forward to reading your contributions on the discussion board at:

<http://chat.thefreeschool.education/forum131.html> .

Jay and Conny