

## SPEAKING PART 2: Practising for Cue cards / Adapting Topics

### 1. FAMOUS PEOPLE

There are 48 Academic and 24 General IELTS exams each year. They are held in over 1,000 locations across 144 countries. Because of time differences, an exam held at 9 am in China or the USA, has to be different to the exam in England at 9 am on the same day.

That means there are a LOT of variations.

Because it is a long, expensive process to write, trial, and issue exams, it means that questions are repeated in different places and in different months.

We don't get to hear what's on every paper. Only a fraction of students report back, but even from those, it is clear that questions about famous people come up somewhere at least once a month.

Here are some examples.

1. Talk about a **person that you saw on the news** and would like to meet.

This could be anyone – a celebrity or ordinary person, and it could be someone alive or dead. For example, in September, Einstein and Richard III of England were in the news although Einstein died in 1955, and Richard III in 1485! You would have to say why you would like to meet them.

2. Describe your favourite **famous person**.

This could be any well-known person, alive or dead, such as Julius Caesar or Oprah Winfrey. You would have to say why they were your favourite.

3. Describe a **famous person**.

This has to be someone well-known – again, they could be alive or dead.

4. Describe a **sportsperson** with a good performance in sport events.

This has to be someone renowned for sports, but they don't necessarily have to be famous. For example you may want to talk about the captain of your local football club, or someone who has limited fame, such as Hafthór Júlíus Björnsson, who is a European champion weightlifter from Iceland, but is not well known globally.

5. Talk about a famous **public figure** that you like.

A public figure is "a famous person who is often written about in newspapers and magazines or is often on television or the radio" (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary). It could be someone alive or dead; a singer like Nancy Ajram (Lebanon), a politician like Ataturk (Turkey), a businessman like Jack Ma (China) or anyone else who gets media attention.

6. Describe a **famous person who is not from your country**.

This has to be someone from outside "your" country, but if you are living outside the country of your birth, you could talk about someone from anywhere! What IELTS is testing here is world-knowledge.

7. Talk about a **person who impressed you with his/her beauty**.

This has to be someone acknowledged as handsome, beautiful or good-looking. It could be someone from the past, like Queen Nefertiti (Egypt) or someone living, like Dilan Reid (USA).

8. Describe a **person that you know who dresses exceptionally well**.

This could be someone who is a fashion model, like Nethra Raghuramanor (India) or someone rich, who can afford designer clothes like Thomas Heatherwick (UK). They needn't necessarily be famous: you could talk about your cousin if he/she is a fashionista.

Note how many of these questions don't have to be about a **live** person.

Because they have appeared in the past, these questions (or ones very similar) **are likely to appear again**, so how can you prepare?

Well, you could choose to practise talking about two or three people, or you could try to find someone who fits several cue cards.

A Google search typing in **famous sportsman + handsome + clothes** or **sportswoman + beauty + fashion** would give you some ideas. For example a page titled '*The 10 most stylish athletes of all time*' came up on my search. I scrolled down the list and decided to choose **Cristiano Ronaldo** (who was number 3).

After a few minutes, this is what I learned:

- He was born on a small island called Madeira off the coast of Portugal. He's 30 years old. His father is dead and his mother had cancer, and he has one son, two older sisters and a brother.
- He is 6'1" tall (or 1.86m); he has dark brown hair and light brown eyes. He is of Moroccan descent and his grandmother was from Cape Verde.
- He is Portuguese but he usually plays for Real Madrid football club.
- He was voted No.3 of the world's most stylish men, for his looks. He has appeared on the covers of *Time* magazine, *Now* and *Vogue*, and in hundreds of newspapers and magazine articles in publications like *Man's World India*, *Forbes*, the *New York Times* and the *Telegraph*.
- He models jeans for Armani and shoes for Nike. He started his own fashion company in 2008, (CR7) which started selling underwear, but now includes shirts, shoes and fragrances.
- He is often called the 'best player in the world'. He is the captain of Portugal's national team and the first person from Portugal to win three 'Golden Ball' awards. With Manchester United and Real Madrid – teams from Spain and the UK, he has won 3 Premier Leagues, 2 UEFA Champions League, 1 UEFA Super Cup and 2 FIFA Club World Cups. He holds the record for the most goals scored (17) in a single season and the fastest player ever to get 200 goals. He is the only player in the world to score more than 50 goals every season for 5 seasons. This month (October 2015) he became Real Madrid's all-time leading goal-scorer.
- He is one of the highest-paid sportsmen and is worth at least \$80 million a year.
- He has a newly-discovered galaxy named after him. It was spotted this year (2015) and first called the 'Cosmos Redshift 7' but then renamed the CR7 galaxy after Ronaldo's nickname (and the name of his fashion company) CR7.
- CR7 stands for Cristian Ronaldo, and the 7 is for the position he plays.
- He has written a book called 'Moments' and is the subject of several other books written by sports experts and football fans.
- He does a lot of charity work, especially for his island, Madeira, and for disaster relief. For example, in 2012, he sold the golden boot he won in 2011 for €1.5 million and gave the money to fund schools for children in Gaza. In 2013, he became Save the Children's new Global Artist Ambassador, to help fight child hunger and in 2014, he joined FIFA's "11 against Ebola" campaign to help stop the spread of the Ebola virus from West Africa. He doesn't have any tattoos because he regularly donates blood.
- In addition to Portuguese, he speaks Spanish, English, some French and a little bit of German. He learned Spanish as a teenager, and picked up the others by interacting with international team mates, aid workers, celebrities and so on. He learned by listening and from friends, not with books and classes. His team-mates say he is very kind and friendly with everyone who surrounds him.

He may not be my favourite famous person, or anyone I want to meet, but **by practising** what I learned about him, I could answer several cue cards.

For example, these questions would be easy to answer:

<p>Talk about a person that you saw on the news and would like to meet. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is this person?</li> <li>- Why was he/she on the news?</li> <li>- Why do you want to meet him/her?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Australia, Oct 2015)</b></p>	<p>Describe a person that you know who dresses exceptionally well. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is this person?</li> <li>- What does he/she do for a living?</li> <li>- Why do you think his/her style is very good?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Australia, Sep 2015)</b></p>
<p>Describe your favourite famous person. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is he/she?</li> <li>- What does he/she do?</li> <li>- When did he/she become famous?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Brazil, Jun 2015, Saudi, Bulgaria, March 2015)</b></p>	<p>Describe a sportsperson with a good performance in sport events. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is it?</li> <li>- Which sport is it?</li> <li>- How do you feel about his/her performance?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Australia, Mar 2015)</b></p>
<p>Talk about a famous public figure that you like. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is this person?</li> <li>- Why do you like him/her?</li> <li>- When did you first come to know about him/her?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Singapore, Australia, March 2015)</b></p>	<p>Describe a famous person. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is he/she?</li> <li>- What is he/she famous for?</li> <li>- How did you know about this person?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. India Mar 2015)</b></p>
<p>Describe a famous person whom you like. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is this person?</li> <li>- What is he/she famous for?</li> <li>- Why do you like this person?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Malaysia, Hungary Jan 2015)</b></p>	<p>Talk about any sports person who did well in a sporting event. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is this person?</li> <li>- What sport does he/she play?</li> <li>- Do you like him/her and why?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Singapore, UAE, Jan 2015)</b></p>
<p>Describe a famous person who is not from your country. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is he/she?</li> <li>- What is this person famous for?</li> <li>- Would you like to meet him/her, and why?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Australia, Dec 2014)</b></p>	

And with some additional personal statements, I could answer these:

<p>Describe a person that you would like to be similar to. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is that person?</li> <li>- What is he/she doing?</li> <li>- Why would you like to be similar to him/her?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Netherlands, India, Mar 2015)</b></p> <p><i>Most people would like to be similar to someone who is very good at what they do, gives to charity and earns lots of money.</i></p>	<p>Talk about a person who impressed you with his/her beauty. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is this person?</li> <li>- How do you know him/her?</li> <li>- Why do you think he/she is so beautiful?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Singapore, UAE, Jan 2015)</b></p> <p><i>Remember that what you say to an examiner doesn't have to be true! One could be impressed by someone's good looks or by a beautiful personality.</i></p>
<p>Describe a moment when you met a person whom you were longing to meet. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When and where did you meet?</li> <li>- What did you do together?</li> <li>- Why did you want to meet that person?</li> </ul> <p><b>(e.g. Saudi Oct 2015)</b></p> <p><i>It is possible to pretend a meeting took place at a sporting event/school trip/charity concert and so on.</i></p>	

And maybe even these:

<p>Talk about a person who has learned a foreign language. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Who is he/she?</li><li>- What language is it?</li><li>- Why did he/she choose this language?</li></ul> <p><b>(e.g. India, Israel, Aug 2015)</b></p>	<p>Talk about a person you know who speaks a foreign language fluently. Please say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Who is this person?</li><li>- When and where did you meet him/her?</li><li>- How did that person learn the language?</li></ul> <p><b>(e.g. Pakistan, July 2015)</b></p>
<p><i>My famous person speaks Spanish fluently, English well and also knows some French and a little German.</i></p>	

Do a little research and see if you can find a famous person you can talk about.

Be prepared to say

- what the person looks like
- what their jobs is/what they do
- how you know about them
- why you like/dislike them
- whether you would like to meet them/ have met them

It could be a famous person who

- speaks other languages, like Queen Rania of Jordan.
- is famous for their beauty such as Mugdha Godse, the model from India.
- is a successful sportsman like Yuzuru Hanyu, the figure skater from Japan.

How many cue cards could you adapt your person to?

Start by writing down what you want to say about the person. This helps with grammar and cohesion. Look at the words you use. Could you use a 'less common' synonym?

Practise talking about your person. Record yourself on a computer, tablet or mobile phone. Play it back so you can hear how you sound and make any corrections. Practise several times until you are familiar with the information.

Write a list of questions you think people would want to know about your person. Put them on slips of paper and mix them up. Then practise answering each question. The order will be random, so you'll be able to speak about the person more naturally. You don't want to sound like a machine. You can do this as often as you like for practice.

The more you talk about your famous person, the easier it will be to adapt them to any appropriate cue card during the exam.