IELTS Listening: format, parts and question types

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One-page cheat sheet · four parts, timing, every question type, marking

> **The recording plays once. Type each answer the moment you hear it — on computer only 2 minutes remain at the end. Use every pause to read ahead.**

Format at a glance

Length	~30 min incl. reading pauses	Parts	4 × 10 = 40 questions
Checking	computer **2 min**; paper 10 min	Plays	once, no pause or rewind
Marks	1 per question → band 0–9	Academic / GT	the same test

Accents: British, Australian, North American and others. Part 1 easiest, Part 4 densest.

Correct answers → band (approx.)

Correct	Band	Correct	Band
39–40	9	23–25	6
37–38	8.5	18–22	5.5
35–36	8	16–17	5
32–34	7.5	13–15	4.5
30–31	7	10–12	4
26–29	6.5		

Scale varies slightly by test. 7.0 = miss 10; 6.5 = almost 14. Easy marks in Parts 1–2 beat chasing every hard one in Part 4.

The four parts

Part 1 — everyday conversation, 2 people

booking, signing up for a course, hire or delivery terms · form / notes

- **Dictation:** names spelled out, phone numbers in groups. Drill the alphabet by ear: A/E/I, G/J, B/V.
- **Corrections:** a date or price changes — write what the conversation settles on.
- Easiest 10: a misspelt easy word costs as much as a hard Part 4 one.

Part 2 — monologue, everyday topic

guide to a town, sports-centre rules, festival programme · maps, plans, MC

- On a map, find the **starting point** first ("we're at the entrance"). In the pause: north, entrance, labelled streets.
- Direction words: *opposite, next to, on the corner, at the end, just before*. Watch "not this one, the next one".

Part 3 — academic discussion, 2–4 people

students and a tutor on a project · MC, matching, flow-charts

- Note who is who before it starts — questions ask for one person's opinion.
- **Not the first mention:** one suggests, another objects, the tutor decides. The answer is the conclusion.

Part 4 — academic lecture

history of an invention, biology study, economic process · notes / table / diagram, 10 gaps

- Usually no pause inside — read all questions beforehand.
- Signposts: *first, another reason, however, finally* = next answer coming.
- Missed one? Jump to the next gap.

Question types — how to answer

Type	Tactic
Form / Note / Table Completion	Field sits in the text with the question number. Predict the gap first: number, name, noun, adjective. Check plural endings — the word must fit the sentence.
Sentence Completion	Wording almost never matches the recording — listen for the same meaning in other words.
Flow-chart Completion	Boxes follow the recording; completed boxes show where the speaker is.
Short-answer	A word or two or a number, not a sentence: often a quantity, time or name.
Map / Plan Labelling	Drag a name onto the map or tick a letter in a grid. Extra options in the list.
Diagram Labelling	Academic parts. See which parts are already labelled — the lecturer describes from them.
Multiple Choice	Single: 3 options, one right. "Choose TWO/THREE" from 5–7: each a separate mark, any order, can't tick more. Read options first, note how they differ.
Matching	Items heard in list order, features in any order; extra options stay unused. One of the hardest — unsure? give the most likely.

Marking — common losses

✗	✓
answer longer than the limit (right meaning)	"ONE WORD AND/OR A NUMBER" = word, number, or both; article counts
misspelt word	exact letters; British / American usually both OK; numbers as digits
blank gap at the end	any guess — no penalty for wrong

How to prepare — checklist

- Whole section without stopping: 30 min of attention is a skill.
- Sort mistakes by cause: didn't hear, misspelt, over the limit, picked the first option mentioned.
- Replay hard bits with the transcript — see how the answer was paraphrased.
- Different accents: podcasts, lectures, news, not only British English.
- Practise on a computer: typing while listening and dragging labels.