IELTS vocabulary on your commute, with no internet

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One-page cheat sheet · what to learn on the road, what to skip, a weekly routine

> **An hour or more a day on the road is 6–8 hours a week. Reading passages and essays don't fit a shaking phone — words do.**

Don't do on the road

✗	Why
Full tests, timed sections	Reading and Listening need quiet and 30–60 uninterrupted minutes. A test broken by a stop scores below your real level and spoils your statistics.
Essays	250 words on a shaking phone is a chore; an essay without a review of its mistakes teaches almost nothing.
Random "100 words for IELTS" videos	No context, no repetition — gone in a week. In the metro they won't even load.

Do: vocabulary

Vocabulary splits well into 2–3-minute pieces and needs no quiet. **Five cards per station.** Over a week those bursts add up to more than an hour of real work on words — as much as an evening lesson.

> **Otherwise flashcards become a game for its own sake: the three conditions below.**

Three conditions for useful flashcards

1. Words from exam texts

Common words you already know; really rare ones hardly come up. Most useful: **mid-frequency** words from academic Reading passages and Listening lectures: `proportion · absorb · sediment · scarce · deliberate`

2. Repeat until learned

Not a single pass. A word sticks when you recognise it **several times in a row**. One right answer means nothing.
Rule of thumb: **three correct in a row** = learned; one mistake — the count starts over.

3. Spell it, not just recognise it

In Listening and Reading a misspelt answer is a wrong answer.
✗ recieve → ✓ receive — costs a mark.

From easy to hard: three ways to drill a word

Mode	What you do	What it trains
Learn new words	English word → pick the translation out of five	Recognition. Wrong options of the same part of speech, so guessing by form doesn't work.
Reverse	Translation → pick the English word out of five	Recall rather than recognition — what Writing and Speaking need.
Spell it	Translation → type the word yourself	Spelling. Any typo is a mistake and resets that word's streak.

Small portions, many repeats

- Work through a small set (**seven words**: one common, one rare, five mid-frequency), not the whole list.
- A word comes back every few cards until learned; a learned word leaves, a new one takes its place.
- So every word is repeated many times in one ride, not once a week.
- Want a calm look at the translation and example? Turn off auto-advance after a right answer.

Tie words to your tests

- After every Listening and Reading, spend **two minutes** ticking the words you didn't know.
- Train those first: your own gaps, not an abstract list.
- Learned words you feel you've forgotten — return them to training.

Fitting it into the week

When	What	Why
Morning, on the way to class	Learn new words, 10–15 cards	A fresh head takes new words easily.
Evening, on the way home	Reverse, on the same words	Recall is harder than recognition — that's what makes them stick.
Once or twice a week	Spell it	Slow, but catches the typos that cost marks in the exam.
After every Reading / Listening	Tick unknown words (2 min)	They move to the front of the queue.
Once a week	A full test — at a desk, not on the road	Still the main reference point; the commute won't replace it.

Checklist

- □ Words from exam texts, mostly mid-frequency
- □ Three in a row before a word counts as learned
- □ Spelling drilled, not just recognition
- □ Unknown words from every test added to my list
- □ No tests or essays on the road
- □ Offline: open the word list once online before going underground