



VIDEO 1 • IELTS SPEAKING COURSE

Speaking Baseline & Criteria Guide

Understand the test, record your starting point and identify the skill that needs attention first

Learning focus	Test format, four assessment criteria and personal diagnosis
Use with	IELTS Speaking Course — Video 1
Practice time	50–70 minutes plus three recordings

YOUR GOAL

Create honest baseline evidence before choosing what to study. This guide does not predict a band score; it helps you identify the most useful starting point.

Understand • Record • Diagnose • Choose

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The Speaking test at a glance

The IELTS Speaking test is a recorded interview with a certified examiner. It lasts 11–14 minutes and contains three parts. Academic and General Training candidates take the same Speaking test.

Part	Time	What happens	Main demand
Part 1	4–5 minutes	Familiar topics: home, family, work, studies and interests.	Give clear information and opinions about everyday experience.
Part 2	3–4 minutes	One minute to prepare; speak for up to two minutes; brief follow-up.	Speak at length, organise ideas and use appropriate language.
Part 3	4–5 minutes	A more general and abstract discussion connected to Part 2.	Explain, analyse, discuss and speculate.

IMPORTANT

The examiner follows a standard procedure. Your job is not to control the interview or deliver memorised speeches. Listen to each question and respond naturally.

Before your baseline

- Use a phone or computer voice recorder.
- Choose a quiet place and record each task once.
- Do not write full scripts or restart because of a small mistake.
- Keep the recordings; you will compare them with later course work.

My starting goal

Target band (if known): _____ Test date (if booked): _____

The Speaking problem I notice most often:

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The four assessment criteria

Your Speaking performance is assessed through four equally weighted criteria. Use the descriptions below for diagnosis, not self-scoring.

Criterion	What it includes	Diagnostic question
Fluency and Coherence	Continuity, pace, effort, repetition, repair and clear connection of ideas.	Do I keep going at a natural rate and make my meaning easy to follow?
Lexical Resource	Vocabulary range, precision, appropriacy and ability to express meaning another way.	Can I choose natural words and reformulate when I cannot recall one?
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	Range, flexibility and control of spoken sentence structures.	Can I use useful structures without losing control of the sentence?
Pronunciation	Intelligibility, sound production, stress, rhythm and connected speech.	Can a listener understand me without unnecessary effort?

What the criteria do not mean

Criterion	Not the goal
Fluency	Speaking as fast as possible.
Vocabulary	Forcing rare words or an idiom into every answer.
Grammar	Using only complex sentences.
Pronunciation	Copying a British or American accent.

DIAGNOSTIC PRINCIPLE

A useful diagnosis identifies a repeated performance problem—for example, short undeveloped answers, long pauses, vague words, unfinished sentences or unclear stress—not a vague goal such as “improve everything”.

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Baseline recording: three parts

Complete all three recordings before reading the self-check pages. The questions are original IELTS-style practice tasks.

PART 1 — FAMILIAR TOPIC

What do you usually do when you need a short break?

Answer naturally. Add a reason or detail if it helps.

Recording name: Baseline_Part1 My immediate reaction:

PART 2 — LONG TURN

Describe a useful skill you learned outside school or university.

You should say:

- what the skill is
- when and how you learned it
- how you use it now

and explain why it has been useful.

Take one minute to make brief notes, then speak for up to two minutes.

Recording name: Baseline_Part2 Did I maintain the long turn?

PART 3 — DISCUSSION

Why do some practical skills become more valuable as society changes?

Develop your position with a reason, example, comparison or result.

Recording name: Baseline_Part3 Did I explain my idea?

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Review the evidence

Listen once for meaning, then once for language. Do not count every small mistake. Look for patterns.

Area	Evidence to notice	My result
Fluency	Long silent pauses; repeated restarts; filler chains; answer stops too early.	☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often
Coherence	Reason is unclear; ideas jump; details do not support the question.	☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often
Vocabulary	Repeated basic word; vague word; memorised phrase; wrong collocation.	☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often
Grammar	Sentence remains unfinished; tense shifts unintentionally; error hides meaning.	☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often
Pronunciation	Key word unclear; stress hides meaning; speech is broken into single words.	☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often

Choose the repeated weakness

- ☐ My answers are too short or underdeveloped.
- ☐ I have ideas but long pauses interrupt them.
- ☐ I repeat the question or the same vocabulary.
- ☐ My grammar breaks down when I extend an answer.
- ☐ My answer becomes irrelevant or difficult to follow.
- ☐ Important words are unclear on playback.

The weakness that appears most clearly across my recordings is:

DO NOT SELF-AWARD A BAND

This short diagnostic cannot produce a reliable IELTS band score. It helps you select targeted practice. Formal score diagnosis requires trained human assessment of a complete performance.

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Your first practice path

Main evidence	Start here	Practice focus
Short answers / repetition	Video 2 — Part 1 Workbook	Answer → Reason → Detail; natural paraphrasing; concise development.
Part 2 stops early / loses direction	Video 3 — Part 2 Workbook	One-minute planning; relevant development; maintaining the long turn.
Part 3 ideas stay shallow	Video 4 — Part 3 Workbook	Answer → Explain → Example → Wider view.
Long pauses / filler chains	Matched fluency practice inside Videos 2–4	Thinking time, reformulation and continuation based on the task.
Grammar breaks down	Matched Grammar for Speaking clinic	Practise the specific time frame or structure causing errors.
Unclear speech	Pronunciation Focus tasks inside core workbooks	Meaning groups, key-word stress and record–review practice.

My decision

I will begin with: _____

Because my recording shows: _____

One-week evidence target

1. Record three new answers using the matched workbook.
2. Change one priority only; do not try to repair every weakness at once.
3. Compare the new recording with the baseline using the same diagnostic question.
4. Write one observable improvement and one remaining problem.

ROSS IELTS RULE

Find the specific weakness first. Then practise the smallest useful change and collect evidence that it improved.

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Progress tracker

Use one row after each core workbook or guided practice pack. Keep your evidence specific.

No.	Date	Practice completed	Evidence of improvement	Next weakness
1	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____	_____
6	_____	_____	_____	_____

End-of-core comparison

After Video 4, repeat the three baseline tasks with new questions. Compare:

- ☐ How quickly you answer the exact question.
- ☐ How well you maintain and organise speech.
- ☐ Whether reasons, details and examples are more relevant.
- ☐ Whether grammar and pronunciation remain controlled as answers develop.

The clearest improvement is:

The next weakness requiring targeted practice is:

WHEN SELF-REVIEW IS NOT ENOUGH

If you cannot identify the cause of a repeated problem, use teacher feedback or an IELTS Speaking Mock Test for human diagnosis rather than guessing.

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What to do next

Before continuing

- ☐ Save all three baseline recordings.
- ☐ Select one primary weakness.
- ☐ Write your first practice path in the tracker.
- ☐ Continue to Video 2 with evidence—not a general feeling that your Speaking is weak.

NEXT COURSE STEP

Continue to Video 2: IELTS Speaking Part 1. Use your Part 1 baseline answer to test whether Answer → Reason → Detail improves your development without making the response sound memorised.

Official source notes

- [IELTS.org — Academic Speaking test format](https://ielts.org/academic/speaking/test-format)
- [IELTS.org — Speaking Key Assessment Criteria](https://ielts.org/speaking/key-assessment-criteria)
- [IELTS.org — Speaking band descriptors and sample tasks](https://ielts.org/speaking/band-descriptors-and-sample-tasks)

All learner activities, sample answers and explanatory wording in this resource were written specifically for Ross IELTS Academy.

