

Brainstorming language for IELTS Listening

Brainstorm language that you might hear in the IELTS Listening test or might need to write into each category below.

Phrases that help you identify the correct information (to write in gaps, to choose the correct multiple choice option, etc)

Phrases which show that the last thing that was said wasn't the correct answer

Phrases which show that the next thing that will be said won't be the correct answer

Phrases which show that the last thing that was said was the right answer

Phrases which show that the next thing that will be said will be the right answer

Expressions which show that the speaker is changing topic (and so you probably need to look at the next question)

Spelling and punctuation

Things that need to be written with capital letters

Letters whose names sound similar to each other when spelling

Letters whose names sound similar to words

Compound nouns written as one word

Compound nouns written with a hyphen

Compound nouns written as two words

Numbers

Times that can be said more than one way

Dates that can be said different ways

Telephone numbers that can be said different ways

Large numbers that can be said different ways

Small numbers that can be said different ways

Prices that can be said different ways

Currencies that can be written as words and symbols

Numbers which sound like different numbers

Numbers which sound like different words

Describing how to get somewhere

Directions

Positions

Compare your answers with those below.

Brainstorming language for IELTS Listening

Many other answers are possible, so check if you wrote something different.

Phrases that help you identify the correct information (to write in gaps, to choose the correct multiple choice option, etc)

Phrases which show that the last thing that was said wasn't the correct answer

"X (but) actually,..."

"X but in fact..."

"X. Having said that..."

"X." "Hmm, I'm not sure."

"X. However,..."

"X." "I can see why you might think so."

"X." "I don't think that's such a good idea."

"X." "I don't think we could cope with that."

"X. I meant to say..."

"X." "I thought so too (then...)"

"X." "I wanted something that was more..."

"X but (it seems that) I was mistaken."

"X. I was turned down."

"X. I wasn't eligible."

"X." "I would if it was..."

"X." "I'd much sooner do something else."

"X." "I'll give it a miss."

"X." "I'm afraid..."

"X (but) in reality..."

"X. Instead of that, we hope to..."

"X." "It has yet to happen."

"X." "It's slightly less than that."

"X." "It's still under construction."

"X. My mistake,..."

"X." "Not necessarily."

"X." "Not quite."

"X. Silly me,..."

"X. Sorry, I mean..."

"X." "That's not due to start until..."

"X." "That's okay (thanks)."

"X." "That's too..."

"X. The issue was that I had overlooked..."

"X." "The only one closed down last year."

"X. The trouble with that is..."

"X. This is complicated by the fact that..."

"X. This turned out to be misguided."

"X." "To be honest,..."

"X." "We need to be more realistic."

"X." "We'll leave that out then."

"X. Whoops,..."

Phrases which show that the next thing that will be said won't be the correct answer

"Although there is X,..."
"At first X."
"At one time X"
"Due to the weather, X..."
"He claims that it is X"
"I don't intend to suggest that X."
"I had started off by X."
"I put off X."
"(To start with) I thought X."
"Instead of X,..."
"It is commonly thought that X."
"It is supposed to be X."
"It isn't enough (by itself) to X."
"It used to be X."
"It wouldn't help to X."
"It's impossible to X."
"I'm afraid X..."
"Many believe that X."
"My initial impression was X."
"My original idea was X."
"My parents had been saying that X."
"Rather than X."
"There (once) was X."
"They didn't go as far as to X."
"Unfortunately, X..."
"We were planning to X."
"We'll be too busy to X."
"What you can't do is X."
"You don't have to X."
"You might think that X."
"You mustn't always assume that X."

Phrases which show that the last thing that was said was the right answer

"X." "(And) I agree."
"X (and) in fact,..."
"X (and) it continues to do so."
"X (and) it still is."
"X (and) that is the case."
"X (and) that remains the case."
"X." "Certainly."
"X." "Exactly."
"X." "Fine."
"X." "I suppose you're right."
"X." "I think that's fair."
"X." "I'll put that (down) (then)."

"X. It has more to do with this than with..."
"X." "It sounds fine."
"X. (So) I'll do that."
"X." "I'll put that down as a definite."
"X. Let me check. Yes, that's right."
"X might be better."
"X." "No problem."
"X." "Of course."
"X. So, we settled on that."
"X." "(That) sounds good."
"X. (A host of) studies confirm this."
"X." That should be all right."
"X." "That won't be a problem."
"X." "That's a great help."
"X, which is also my view."
"X, which is correct."
"X, which is indeed so."

Phrases which show that the next thing that will be said will be the right answer

"Apparently, X."
"As expected, X."
"As most people think, X."
"As usual, X."
"But the main attraction is X."
"Despite the doubts about X,..."
"Even today, X."
"Ever since then, X."
"I didn't expect X."
"I ended up X."
"I even X."
"I forgot to mention that X."
"If you're interested in this, then you'll have to X."
"(And) in fact, X."
"In particular, X."
"In the end, X."
"It has more to do with X."
"It is well known that X."
"It's only a matter of time before X."
"It's very important to X."
"I'm available X."
"I'm happy to report that X."
"Let's make it X."
"More often, X."
"More typically, X."
"Particularly, X."
"Priority is given to X."

“Something we’re planning to do to help is to X.”
“The first thing is to X.”
“Then it must be X.”
“There was a consensus on X.”
“There’s absolutely no doubt that X.”
“Unlike many other places, X.”
“We can’t go beyond X.”
“We do have X.”
“We found that X.”
“We haven’t only thought of that, but also X.”
“We must assume that X.”
“We sorted it out by X.”
“We’re going to get someone to X.”
“We’ve addressed this problem by X.”
“We’ve agreed to X.”
“What I actually chose to do was X.”
“What struck me was X.”
“What really stood out was X.”
“You (might also) need to think about X.”

Expressions which show that the speaker is changing topic (and so you probably need to look at the next question)

A second important area...
(Now) about...
And I do need to tell you about...
Another area (of concern) is...
Anyway,...
By the way,...
Can I ask you about...?
Finally,...
(Well) I’d like to talk to you now about...
If we’ve finished that topic,...
In the following century,...
In the... period/ era/ age,...
Incidentally,...
Is there anything else?
(Now/ So) let’s consider/ look at/ talk about/ turn our attention to...
More recently,...
Moving on to...
(Right,) now that everyone..., we’ll get on with...
Now we’ll turn to...
Okay, let me give you an outline of...
One final piece of (interesting) information.
One final point/ last thing/ more question.
Onto the larger issues,...
(Well) that takes us to...

The next (big) step was...
The next point...
Then the following...
To move onto...
Turning (our attention) to...
We've also...
What about...?
What's left to do?
You haven't mentioned...

Spelling and punctuation

Things that need to be written with capital letters

Days of the week
Months
Countries, nationalities and languages
Addresses – Street names, building names, area names
British postcode (e.g. SE1 3TS)
Official job titles (but not general descriptions of jobs)
Names of works of art – The Water Lilies, The Thinker, Christmas Carol, etc

Letters whose names sound similar to each other when spelling

B/V
G/Z
WM/ MM (= double M)

Letters whose names sound similar to words

C/ She
O/ or
Q/ coo/ coup
W/ double

Compound nouns written as one word

bathroom
billboard
bookshop
carpark
handout
hillside
homestay
minibus
newspaper
seafood
textbook
timetable
workbook

Compound nouns written with a hyphen

brother-in-law
do-it-yourself
note-taking
passer-by
X-ray

Compound nouns written as two words

bank statement
bathroom light
biology lesson
city centre
classical music
day off
fishing industry
ground floor
market forces
meal times
office assistant
plastic bag
primary school
research methods
sea level
walking boots

Numbers**Times that can be said more than one way**

23:00
04:00
00:00
12:00
04:20
16:30
04:50
13:15
17:45
9:00 – 17:00
30 min

Dates that can be said different ways

28/6/1970
2010
25/12
1882 – 1886

Telephone numbers that can be said different ways

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090
9944
2223

Large numbers that can be said different ways

100
595
1600
1,100,000
1,000,000,000
500,000
18,000 – 20,000

Small numbers that can be said different ways

0.5
1/4
4/3

Prices that can be said different ways

\$4.50
\$1

Measurements that can be said different ways

125cm
1.34kg
115km/h

Currencies that can be written as words and symbols

dollars
Australian dollars
pounds
Euros
yen

Numbers which sound like different numbers

16 and 60
2 1/3 and 2/3
100 and 1/100
6 and 6th
6th and 1/6
13th and 30th

Numbers which sound like different words

first and fast
fourth and force
four and foe

quarter and quota
nought and note

Describing how to get somewhere

Directions

Climb up to...
Climb/ Come down from...
Cross/ Go across the bridge
Follow the path/ road/ river...
Go past/ Pass...
Go round the (first/ sharp) corner
Go straight ahead (to the far side of...)
Go through the first/ second/ last door (on your left)
Go/ Walk (further) down the path
Go/ Walk along/ through...
Go/ Walk towards... (but/ but then...)
Leave... by the main/ front/ side/ back entrance (and...)
Moving east,...
Take the first/ second/ third turning on your left/ right
Turn left/ right (at.../ just before...) (into...)
Turn right and right again
Walk out of...
When you get to/ reach...
You will (soon/ eventually/ immediately) come to/ find...

Positions

(right) ahead of you
(just) inside (the door).
(just/ immediately) adjacent to/ bordering/ next door to/ next to/ beside/ by...
(just/ immediately) on/ to the right of...
(just/ immediately) on/ to your right
(just/ immediately) south of...
(just) the other side of...
a kilometre away
at the (other) end of...
at the back of...
at the bottom of the stairs
at the end of a/ the path/ road
at the entrance to...
at/ on the far side of...
at the intersection/ junction of... and...
before you get to...
between ... and.../ between two...
can be found...
close to/ near/ in the vicinity of...
downstairs – upstairs

further east, ...
halfway down ...
in the (south-eastern/ bottom right) corner
in the centre
in the middle of ...
in the southern part/ section of ...
is located/ situated
it's the first/ second (street/ turning) on your left/ right
on the corner of ... (and ...)
on the left-hand side of ...
(right/ diagonally) opposite/ on the other side of ...
surrounded by ...
to the west (of ...)
You will see ... (directly) in front of you

Practice

Say one of the sentences in the first four sections, including the "X", and see if your partner can say if the answer is (probably) X or not. Do the same with four or five sentences from different ones in the first four sections, then switch roles and do the same.

Say a compound noun from the three sections on that topic and see if your partner can say if it should be spelt as two words, one word, or with a hyphen.

Pronounce all the letters and accompanying words, making sure that you pronounce them differently.

Say one of the letters or accompanying numbers and see if your partner can write down the correct thing.

Try to pronounce all the numbers above in at least two ways.

Say one of the numbers above and see if your partner can say it back another way.

Look at some maps from IELTS Listening exam papers and try to describe all the locations in as many different ways as you can.