

IELTS Speaking Part One tips and useful phrases

What tips would you give someone about doing well in IELTS Speaking Part One?

Cross out tips about IELTS Speaking Part One below that you don't agree with, then compare with the rest of the class

1. Learn more complex time expressions that you can use in your answers
2. Make each of your answers as long as you can
3. Always answer with the same tense as the question
4. Always correct yourself if you realise you've made a grammar mistake or used the wrong word
5. Always correct yourself if you've said something that you think they won't understand
6. If you don't understand the question, be as specific as you can about what the problem is
7. If you are not sure what the question means after they've repeated it, answer it anyway
8. If you still don't understand, ask again
9. If you think you understand the question but aren't sure, mention your understanding of the question in your answer
10. If the question doesn't exactly match your situation, make sure that is reflected in your answer
11. Fill all silences/ Think out loud
12. If you're not sure of the answer, just use your imagination
13. If you're not sure of the answer, just say so
14. If you're not sure of the answer, say so and then answer the question anyway
15. If you think it's a strange question, say so
16. If you can't think of anything to say or can't answer the question, just say so
17. Learn complex language to describe your own accommodation, hobbies, studies

Add at least two useful words or phrases to each of the tips that you haven't crossed off, then compare your phrases with those on the next page.

Suggested answers

1. Learn more complex time expressions that you can use in your answers – “the day before yesterday”, “in the 90s”, “when I was in my early teens”
2. Make each of your answers as long as you can – Not necessary and not a good idea because it means you aren’t really communicating, and you could even make the examiner think that you have memorised your answers
3. Always answer with the same tense as the question – Not necessarily true, although probably true at least 80% of the time, so should be “Usually answer with the same tense as the question”
4. Always correct yourself if you realise you’ve made a grammar mistake or used the wrong word – Not a good idea, as it ruins your fluency and ruins communication
5. Always correct yourself if you’ve said something that you think they won’t understand – “I meant to say...”, “Let me try and answer that again. I...”, “I’m not sure I’ve explained myself properly. I...”
6. If you don’t understand the question, be as specific as you can about what the problem is – “I didn’t understand the last word/ first part of the question.”, “What does... mean?”, “There was one word I couldn’t understand. Can put it another way?”, “Do you mean...?”, “If I understand correctly, you want me to...”, “Should I talk about Tokyo, or the city that I come from?”
7. If you are not sure what the question means after they’ve repeated it, answer it anyway – Not a good idea
8. If you still don’t understand, ask again – “Sorry, I still don’t understand. Could you explain what you mean another way?”, “I’m still not quite sure what you mean.”
9. If you think you understand the question but aren’t sure, mention your understanding of the question in your answer – “If you mean..., then...”, “I guess you mean... Well,...”
10. If the question doesn’t exactly match your situation, make sure that is reflected in your answer – “Actually,...”, “In my case,...”, “I can’t exactly answer that, but...”
11. Fill all silences/ Think out loud – “Well...”, “Hmmm.”, “Let me think.”, “Let me see.”, “That’s a difficult question.”, “I’ve never really thought about that before.”, “No one has ever asked me that before.”
12. If you’re not sure of the answer, just use your imagination – This is acceptable, but telling the truth would probably produce more complex language
13. If you’re not sure of the answer, just say so – Better to say at least something (see below)
14. If you’re not sure of the answer, say so and then answer the question anyway – “I don’t remember very well, but...”, “The first thing that comes to mind is...”, “I don’t know a lot about this, but I guess...”, “I’m no expert on this, but I would imagine...”, “If I remember correctly,...”, “It was a long time ago, but I think...”
15. If you think it’s a strange question, say so – That would be a little rude!
16. If you can’t think of anything to say or can’t answer the question, just say so – “I’m afraid I really don’t know.”, “I can’t really remember.”, “It was too long.”, “Nothing is coming to mind.”, “I can’t think of anything.”, “My mind’s gone blank.”
17. Learn complex language to describe your own accommodation, hobbies, studies – A good idea – the language to learn is different for each person (“condo” for some people, “detached house” for others, etc)