

# IELTS SUCCESS

The IELTS is not an easy test – even for native born English speakers, writes **Karen Bleakley**



I'm a freelance writer, so a love of the English language comes with the job. Being a geek, I'd have probably enjoyed the challenge of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Unfortunately for my husband, Matt, our Australian visa application wasn't based on my skills. As the main applicant for our skilled-independent visa, he was the one who needed to pass the test.

Although he's a native English speaker, born and bred in Hampshire, he was terrified of taking the test. As an electrical technician, he didn't spend much time writing letters or essays. In fact, he hadn't done anything like it since his school days 18 years earlier.

### WHAT IT INVOLVES

The IELTS comprises of writing, reading, speaking and listening sections. As our migration agent, OMARA registered Veronika Hurbis from Sort Out My Visa, explains, "These days most skilled visa

Speaking forms one part of the IELTS test



advise all clients to practise so that they are prepared.

"There is a huge amount of information available on the internet to help individuals prepare. YouTube, in particular, has some very useful clips and practice materials. Most of these are free.

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applicants have to undertake the IELTS test in order to score 60 or above on the skilled visa points tests. This includes UK passport holders and those who only speak in the English language.

"Almost all of our clients who have had to take the test, regardless of their profession or qualifications, have found the test challenging. It is not an easy test, even for native born English speakers. We

"In addition, many of the IELTS test centres run practice sessions. These have been useful, particularly for clients who have had to take the test on a number of occasions in order to obtain the necessary scores.

"If you don't get the right marks the first time around, don't be disheartened! Many people have to take the test again, mostly because they are just 0.5 point >>

Main image, the written test is about structure as much as it is about grammar and spelling



short of the required mark. Although there is no limit on how many times the test can be taken, if you are facing a deadline, then it is crucial to get the IELTS test out of the way as soon as possible. Don't wait until your skills assessment or, if necessary, state nomination, have come through.

"Have as much time as you can up your sleeve so that you can obtain the result by the time you need to apply for your visa."

### GETTING PREPARED

Matt needed a score of at least seven across each section in order for us to meet our visa target. He was aiming for a score of eight as we felt more points might get us picked from the pool of Expression of Interest (EOI) applicants faster.

As we were keen to move to Australia before our twins started school, we didn't have time for him to fail, not to mention the cost involved in retaking it. We followed our agent's advice and downloaded stacks of test papers and

guide books and spent a lot of time online. For the six weeks before the test, Matt spent every evening and lunch break writing assignments under timed conditions. I spent my evenings marking his work and giving him feedback.

It was exhausting, but worth the effort. When the test date arrived he felt prepared and this gave him confidence. After an agonising wait for the results, we found out he'd scored the seven he needed. He was frustrated his writing result dragged his score down (as he'd aced the other sections) but I was just pleased it was over.

Our agent immediately submitted our EOI. Thankfully, going into the pool with 60 points didn't cause any delays as we were selected in the second draw of the month, and our visa was granted a few weeks later.

If you want to avoid retaking the test many times you will need to put the work in. Think of the IELTS as the final hurdle, as things can move very quickly from that point on. Good luck! 🇦🇺

## TOP TIPS FOR THE IELTS TEST

Don't assume just because you're English you'll sail through the test. It's tough and you'll need to work for it. If you're using a migration agent, speak to them as they may have access to resources they can share with you.

If you fail one section, you'll need to retake the test as it's the lowest score that counts. Determine your weak areas so you can focus on those. With the reading test, take it slowly and base your answers on facts not assumptions as some questions can catch you out.

The written test is about structure as much as it is about grammar and spelling. Begin by drafting a quick plan, and then write a clear introduction, with a main body of content and a conclusion that sums up what you've said. Break the time down for the written test, so you know how long to spend on each part of the assignment, as leaving it unfinished will lose you points.

Study test papers in advance if you can



■ Karen is a freelance travel writer and blogger. You can read about her migration journey on her family, travel and lifestyle blog at [www.talesofatwinmum.com](http://www.talesofatwinmum.com) or on Twitter @TalesofaTwinMum.