

IELTS Test-Day Checklist: Everything You Need Before Your Exam

A practical guide to preparing for test day, avoiding last-minute surprises and giving yourself the best chance to perform confidently.

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What you'll find in this guide

Your IELTS test day is approaching. You may have spent weeks or months preparing your English, but have you thought about the practical details? This checklist takes you from the final week through to your results, with a few reminders from our teaching team.

AT A GLANCE

Before the test: confirm your booking, identification and travel. On test day: arrive prepared and manage each skill calmly. After the test: understand your results, including whether One Skill Retake could be an option.

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A Note from LEAP

It's completely normal to feel nervous before an important English test, especially when your results are tied to university admission, professional registration or immigration plans.

From our experience working with IELTS candidates, we've seen how easily small logistical issues can add pressure: an unfamiliar test location, confusion about the Speaking schedule or simply not knowing what to expect when you arrive. Many of these concerns are preventable.

The goal in your final days isn't to learn everything you missed over the past few months. It's to arrive prepared, rested and ready to demonstrate the English you already have.

01. One Week Before Your Test

Confirm your test arrangements

- ☐ Check the date, reporting time and exact address of your test centre.
- ☐ Confirm IELTS Academic or General Training and your test delivery format.
- ☐ Check your Speaking test time and location; it may be scheduled separately.
- ☐ Read the identification requirements in your booking confirmation.
- ☐ Review the instructions from your official test provider and test centre.

LEAP'S TIP

Don't assume your Speaking test is immediately after the other three components. Follow the schedule in your official confirmation, not what a friend experienced.

Familiarise yourself with the environment

For computer-delivered IELTS, try official familiarisation materials so you know how to navigate questions, type answers and use available tools.

Want more computer-based practice? [Explore LEAP Exam](#) for IELTS-style tasks and a chance to become more comfortable working on screen. It complements, rather than replaces, official IELTS familiarisation materials.

For paper-based IELTS, where offered, practise recording answers in the required format and following the relevant timing instructions. If possible, complete at least one realistic practice session.

Review recurring mistakes

Rather than covering every topic again, revisit your feedback and error log. Are you running out of time in Writing? Giving short Speaking answers? Losing marks on particular Reading questions? Missing paraphrases in Listening? Pick a few priorities and don't overwork yourself.

Need a more structured review plan? [Explore IELTS Guided](#) for supported practice and feedback as you prepare.

02. One Day Before Your Test

Prepare everything you need

- ☐ Prepare the original, accepted identification document required for your booking. It may be a passport or another approved ID, depending on your location and provider; check your confirmation carefully.

- ☐ Check the rules for belongings, electronics, stationery, food and drinks.
- ☐ Save your booking details and any instructions you may need.
- ☐ Plan your journey and allow extra time for delays.
- ☐ Check the address carefully, especially if there are several nearby centres.
- ☐ Set an alarm and plan time for breakfast and travel.
- ☐ Confirm any separate Speaking test arrangements.

Keep your preparation light

We generally wouldn't recommend spending the whole day doing mock tests or memorising new vocabulary. A short Listening activity, familiar Speaking questions or a review of Writing feedback is enough if you want to keep your skills active.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING: LAST-MINUTE CRAMMING

It's tempting to think another five hours of intensive study will change everything overnight. Please don't exhaust yourself. We've seen how fatigue and anxiety can affect concentration during a test that demands sustained attention. Give yourself permission to rest.

If you're travelling to another city for the test, consider staying somewhere convenient to the centre. Check in early, make sure you know the route and get a proper night's sleep.

03. On Test Day

Before leaving home or your hotel

- ☐ Bring the exact identification document required by your provider.
- ☐ Double-check your location, reporting time and travel route.
- ☐ Eat something suitable for you and stay hydrated.
- ☐ Wear comfortable clothing for an indoor testing environment.
- ☐ Allow enough time to arrive without rushing.
- ☐ Check for any last-minute provider messages.

When you arrive

Follow the staff's instructions. You may need to complete identification, registration and security checks. Personal belongings and electronic devices may need to be stored according to centre rules.

LEAP'S TIP

If something is unclear, ask the test-centre staff before the test begins. Asking a logistical question is sensible; it has nothing to do with your English ability.

04. During the Test

Listening

Stay focused on the current question while keeping track of what comes next. If you miss an answer, move on. Listen for paraphrases, corrections and changes of direction. Follow the timing and answer-entry instructions for your test format.

Use the note-taking options provided by your centre if they help. Don't assume that every location supplies the same stationery or materials; follow the invigilator's instructions.

Reading

Manage your time across the three sections. If one question takes too long, move on and return if time allows. Answers often rely on paraphrasing rather than identical wording. On computer, use highlighting or note-taking tools where available and helpful.

Writing

Read the task carefully. A common time allocation is roughly 20 minutes for Task 1 and 40 minutes for Task 2. Plan your ideas, monitor the clock and leave a little time to review. Clarity, relevance and accurate language matter more than unnecessarily complicated vocabulary.

Speaking

Greet your examiner naturally when appropriate, whether in person or via video link. A simple "Hello, nice to meet you" is fine, but it isn't a scoring trick. Listen to each question, take a moment if needed and respond naturally rather than rushing into a memorised answer.

If you make a mistake, correct yourself and continue. If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification where the test procedure allows it.

A NOTE FROM LEAP

IELTS Speaking assesses your ability to communicate, not to recite a script. Occasional hesitation or self-correction does not automatically mean a poor performance. Focus on expressing and developing your ideas.



05. After Your Test

What happens next?

Check your official provider's guidance on when and how results are released, how to access or share your Test Report Form (TRF), and how to request an Enquiry on Results or another test if needed. Computer-delivered IELTS results are commonly available within 1–5 days, but timelines vary; always rely on your provider's stated timeframe.

If you achieve your target score

Congratulations! Check how your university, employer, professional body or other receiving organisation wants to receive your results.

If you don't achieve your target score

It's disappointing when your results fall short, especially after a lot of preparation. Before booking again, look carefully at your score profile. Which skills met your target? Where was the gap? Were your results consistent with practice?

A targeted plan may be more useful than repeating the same activities. Writing and Speaking feedback, in particular, can help you understand problems that a band score alone won't explain.

If you need focused help with a particular skill, [explore LEAP IELTS coaching](#) before committing to another test.

06. IELTS One Skill Retake: Do You Need the Whole Test Again?

Imagine you achieved your required bands in Listening, Reading and Speaking, but Writing fell just short. You might not need to retake all four skills. IELTS One Skill Retake allows eligible candidates to retake one component—Listening, Reading, Writing or Speaking—at participating centres.

What you need to know

Eligibility. Your original full test must qualify, and One Skill Retake must be offered for that test format and centre.

Deadline. The retake must be completed within 60 days of your original test date.

Limit. Only one One Skill Retake is permitted for each eligible original full test.

Results. An updated TRF combines your retaken skill score with your original scores for the other three skills; your original TRF remains available.

Cost. Fees and booking arrangements vary by location.

Acceptance. Not all universities, employers, professional bodies or immigration authorities accept One Skill Retake results.

IMPORTANT ACCEPTANCE CAVEAT

Do not assume acceptance because a university or organisation accepts IELTS generally. Rules may differ by course, professional registration pathway, visa subclass or intake. Confirm directly with the receiving organisation before paying for a retake.

What LEAP suggests

One Skill Retake may be worth considering if you already meet the requirement in three skills and have a relatively small, identifiable gap in the fourth. For example, a Writing 6.5 when you need 7.0 might call for focused feedback and a realistic assessment of what can improve in the available time.

A full retake may make more sense if several skills are below target, the receiving organisation does not accept One Skill Retake or your language skills need longer-term development. One Skill Retake is not an easier version of IELTS; the same assessment standards apply.

Before you book, ask: Does my receiving organisation accept it? Am I eligible and within the deadline? How far am I from my target? Do I understand why I lost marks? Can focused practice realistically close the gap?

Check official requirements: [IELTS One Skill Retake](#)

A Final Word from LEAP

Test day can feel like a big moment when the result affects your plans. But your preparation is about more than those few hours. You've spent time developing skills, building confidence and learning to communicate more effectively in English. Whatever the outcome, that progress still matters.

Focus on what you can control, follow official instructions and give yourself the best opportunity to perform at your current level.

Continue Your Preparation with LEAP

Want to practise before test day? Explore LEAP Exam for IELTS-style practice. Need targeted support or feedback after receiving your results? Explore LEAP's IELTS preparation and coaching options.

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Questions about your IELTS preparation? contact@leapenglishpathways.com

This guide offers general preparation advice. Identification rules, permitted items, result timelines and One Skill Retake eligibility or acceptance can vary. Always follow current instructions from your official IELTS provider, test centre and receiving organisation.