



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS



**CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH**  
Language Assessment  
Part of the University of Cambridge

Cambridge English



# IELTS

## Life Skills



**Official Cambridge**  
**Test Practice**

**with answers**

**Mary Matthews**

Cambridge University Press  
[www.cambridge.org/elt](http://www.cambridge.org/elt)

Cambridge English Language Assessment  
[www.cambridgeenglish.org](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781316507124](http://www.cambridge.org/9781316507124)

© Cambridge University Press and UCLES 2016

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of the publishers.

First published 2016

Printed in

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-316-50712-4 Student's Book with answers and Audio

ISBN 978-1-316-50711-7 Audio CDs (2)

The publishers have no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and do not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel timetables, and other factual information given in this work is correct at the time of first printing but the publishers do not guarantee the accuracy of such information thereafter.



## CONTENTS

Information about the <i>IELTS Life Skills</i> test	4
How to use this book	5
Tips for testing learners	6
Test 1	8
Test 2	16
Pictures for Test 1	24
Pictures for Test 2	25
Test 3	26
Test 4	34
Pictures for Test 3	42
Pictures for Test 4	43
Transcripts and Answer keys	44
Prompt questions for the teacher	54
Acknowledgements	55

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE *IELTS LIFE SKILLS* TEST

The *IELTS Life Skills* test is for people who want to live in the United Kingdom and who do not have English as their first language.

It tests how well you can communicate in English – can you understand people and can they understand you?

It is a test of listening and speaking only.

You take the test with another person. You cannot take it alone.

The *IELTS Life Skills* test has four parts or 'phases'.

### Phase 1a (4–5 minutes)

- The examiner asks you and your partner some simple questions about yourself:
  - your name
  - how to spell your name
  - where you come from.
- The examiner asks you and your partner some questions about one or two simple topics, for example food or your friends.  
 Sometimes, the examiner will ask you about one topic and then ask your partner about a different topic. Sometimes, the examiner will ask both you and your partner questions about one topic and then ask you and your partner about a different topic.

### Phase 1b (5 minutes)

The examiner gives you and your partner two different topics. For example, he or she might give you the topic 'the weather' and give your partner the topic 'people you know well'.

- You have 1½ minutes to prepare your questions.
- You must ask your partner some questions about the weather.
- Your partner must ask you some questions about people you know well.

### Phase 2a (4 minutes)

- You listen to two short recordings on a CD.
- The examiner asks you and your partner one question about one of the recordings.
- You then listen to the recordings again and answer two questions about the other recording.

### Phase 2b (3–4 minutes)

- The examiner gives you and your partner a topic, for example 'transport'. You have a conversation about this topic together.

## Topics

Here are some of the topics you might find in the *IELTS Life Skills* test:

- details about you and your life
- family and friends
- buying things
- work
- health
- free time
- education
- learning new things for work
- transport
- your house
- weather

## The focus of the test

*IELTS Life Skills* tests how well you can listen and respond. It also tests how well you can talk with other people and how well they can understand you.

At A1, you need to show that you can:

- listen and respond to simple language, including questions and simple instructions
- give simple information
- talk with another person about simple topics.

In the tasks, you need to show how well you can use English.

You might have to:

- describe something
- give your opinion
- give information about yourself
- say what you prefer
- ask for information
- ask someone to describe something
- agree and disagree
- decide
- suggest
- choose
- explain, give reasons or say why you think something is good or bad / right or wrong.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

### For the learner

This book is to help you study for the *IELTS Life Skills* test at A1 level. You do not need a teacher to use this book. It has all the information you need.

In this book, there are four practice tests from Cambridge English. For each test, there is a recording on the downloadable audio. The recording is two people doing the test.

For each part of the test, there are:

- ideas to help you talk about the different topics in the test
- some questions you can use in the test
- some language you can use in the test
- information to help you in the test (Test tips).

Use the left page and the right page of the book together. First, look at the photos and read the information on the left page of the book. This helps you to understand what happens in each part of the test. Then do the activities on the right page. The activities help you practise each part of the test.

### How to use the recording

Read the information on the right page first. Then listen to two 'candidates' doing part of the test. Then you practise it with a partner or on your own.

For the listening (Phase 2a), read the questions and listen to the recording. Try to answer the questions. Then listen to the two 'candidates' answering the questions and you will hear the correct answers.

Take time to listen to each test as many times as you can. Learn any new words and language. Listen to the recording to help you say the words. Think: 'What do I need to do?' in each part of the test. The people on the recording are not real learners. They do not make mistakes with their English. Use them to help you learn. In real life, learners make mistakes in the test. You can make mistakes but you can still do well in the test. You do not need perfect English.

At the end of the book, there are the words the 'candidates' say (the *transcripts*). The first two or three times you listen to the tests, try not to read the transcripts. This will not help your listening skills. Try to understand what the candidates say. Then you can listen and read at the same time. This can help you to understand the more difficult language. Find the difficult words in a dictionary and learn them. This will help your English to get better.

The best way to practise for a language test is to practise with another person. But this is not always possible. You can do the activities in the book with a partner or on your own.

By the end of the book, you will know:

- what to do in each part of the test
- what the examiner wants in each part of the test
- the kind of language an A1 learner needs to use in the test.

Give yourself lots of time to learn. Use this book to help you.  
 Good luck.

### For the teacher

This book is designed to give information about the *IELTS Life Skills* A1 Speaking and Listening test in terms of its structure, the types of tasks used, the focus of these tasks and the interaction patterns during the test. It includes four full sample tests produced by Cambridge English Language Assessment to provide practice both in and out of the classroom.

The book takes both learner and teacher step-by-step through the test. Each sample test is supplemented with advice for learners which can be integrated into lessons. This is intended to familiarise learners with the test and to ensure they understand exactly what is expected of them in each phase. There are also:

- suggestions for useful language
- tips for what to do during the test
- ideas to help the learners talk about the test topics
- recordings of model candidates doing the tests on the class CDs.

The right- and left-hand pages are designed to be used in conjunction with each other. The left-hand page follows the test format with photographs and the examiner's frame (the words the examiner speaks) for each section. You can use these with your learners to explain what happens in each part of the test. You can then use the corresponding activities on the right-hand page to help the learners practise the language and skills needed for each particular section.

A 'Tips for testing learners' section is included to help teachers prepare authentic practice tests for their learners, even if they do not have any examiner training. Practice tests provide essential, real-life exam experience, particularly for learners who may not have taken formal exams before, or whose exam experience was long ago.

You may also find it helpful to refer to the Cambridge English Language Assessment website. Here you can find sample papers from the test, including instructions for examiners: [www.cambridgeenglish.org](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org). The recordings and pictures in this book will also help to show what a typical *IELTS Life Skills* test looks and sounds like at this level.

The recordings are designed as models. They include discourse features such as hesitation, repetition and pauses to recreate, as far as possible, the way A1 candidates speak. The people in the recordings all have accents. However, unlike real life, the language the 'candidates' use is all grammatically accurate. It needs to be emphasised to learners that this level of accuracy is not necessary to pass the test. Rather, the models can provide learners with ideas and language they can copy in their test.

By the end of this book, learners should feel well prepared and confident about the content, format and level of the *IELTS Life Skills* test at A1.

## TIPS FOR TESTING LEARNERS

The following tips are designed to help any teacher give realistic, authentic exam practice to their learners. The tips are designed to be specific to the *IELTS Life Skills* test, so they will be useful both to more experienced teachers who are used to holding practice tests and less experienced teachers who have not taken the role of examiner with their learners before.

Practice tests are an essential part of preparation. They give learners a clear idea of exactly what will happen during their test and they are a valuable opportunity to deal with confusion and misunderstandings before the real test. In this way, they help learners to deal with exam nerves and apprehension. This is obviously vital for those who have never taken a formal exam before or those whose previous exam experience was many years ago.

However, in order for the practice test to be as useful as possible, it is very important for the teacher to try to recreate exact test conditions as much as possible. This involves finding a separate space away from the rest of the class (if the tests are being conducted in lesson time) and careful preparation before the test. Familiarise yourself with both the materials and the test format well before the test and adopt the role of 'examiner', rather than 'teacher' throughout. The more realistic you can make the practice test, the more useful it will be for your learners. If possible, prepare some feedback either for each pair or for the whole class for the lesson following the practice tests. The feedback can either be on exam skills, language used in the test, or both. This will mean the practice tests are a valuable tool for development as well as assessment for your learners.

### Before the practice test

#### Room and furniture

- Arrange a separate test area for the tests. It does not need to be a classroom; a small office would be suitable, as long as it is quiet and has a power point for the CD player.
- Arrange the furniture in a suitable format before the test. You will need one or two desks (depending on size) and three chairs. You should sit slightly away from the 'candidates', but not too far. The atmosphere should be formal but not intimidating or unfriendly.
- As far as you can, make sure that the candidates are not sitting opposite a sunny window with the sun in their eyes.

#### Materials and equipment

- Have enough paper and pencils for all the candidates to take notes.
- Check both the CD and the CD player before the test for any problems.

#### The test frame

- Make sure you are thoroughly familiar with the test frame (i.e. the words the examiner uses) and materials well before the practice test; you can write some simple reminders on small sticky notes to keep yourself organised during the test.
- If possible, practise reading the test frame (script) with another teacher beforehand to ensure that you are using a suitable tone of voice and speed. Or you could record yourself and play it back.
- Try to make the script sound as natural as possible. Use an appropriate speed for the level but keep your voice natural and clear.
- Emphasise key words naturally but clearly as A1 learners often have problems hearing sentence stress.

#### The tasks

- Ensure that you have chosen appropriate tasks, i.e. do not choose a task relying on experience of education or training for someone who has never attended school.
- However, be careful not to choose materials you know your learners like; you need to base your choice on how appropriate they are for your learners, not if they will like them.

#### Timing

- Experiment with different timing devices until you find the one that is easiest to use. Timing is essential in this test. You need to be able to count seconds. You are not allowed to use your mobile phone for timing in the test.
- Make sure the timing device is discreetly placed so only you can see it and that it does not have a loud tick.
- Do not look obviously at the timing device throughout the exam. You need to keep a very close eye on time but keep it to discreet glances.

#### Comfort

- Make sure you have water to hand for yourself and the candidates.
- Keep the temperature in the room as comfortable as possible.
- Make sure you have a break of at least a couple of minutes between each pair of candidates to finish off the test scores and prepare the materials for the next pair.

#### Marking

- Ensure that you are completely familiar with the assessment criteria and the marksheet.
- If possible, arrange to test with another teacher the first time you do practice tests, i.e. take it in turns to be the examiner so you can feed back on each other's performance.

## TIPS FOR TESTING LEARNERS

### During the practice test

- To keep the exams standardised and fair, it is essential to stick to the test frame (script) with each pair of candidates.
- If a candidate does not understand the instructions for a task, first repeat the instructions more slowly from the script.
- If the candidate still does not understand, break the instructions down into easy-to-follow steps and give examples to help them.
- Do not try to rephrase the instructions completely unless you are confident you can do it in language which suits the level of the learners or you could confuse them more.
- Never try to 'help' the candidate by using their first language, even in a practice test. This would never happen in the real test. Deal with the problem in feedback afterwards.
- Do not fidget during the listening; it distracts the candidates.
- Do not jump in too soon if the candidates hesitate or stumble. Give them a few seconds to think or recover.
- If communication breaks down completely in Phase 2b, use the prompts at the back of the book (see page 54) to encourage communication.
- If using the prompts does not work, encourage three-way communication by asking open but brief questions yourself such as 'Why did you say you don't like public transport, Ahmed?'
- Do not 'join in' with the activity, offering your own views and opinions, even to encourage communication. Instead, ask open questions (i.e. questions that can't be answered with just Yes or No) to encourage the candidates to speak.
- Use simple gestures during the exam to support the students and cut down on any extra narrative from you, e.g. if the learners start talking to you in Phase 1b and 2b, instead of to each other, indicate with your hands that they should talk together in a pair. This saves you having to interrupt and say 'Please talk to your partner.'
- If one learner is dominating in Phase 1b or 2b, you will need to encourage the quieter learner to speak, with questions such as 'And what do you think?' or 'Do you have anything to say about that?'
- If one person continues to dominate, you may have to politely interrupt them and remind them to let the other person speak.
- Sometimes, a learner is so nervous or has such a low level of English that they do not speak in the test, or the other person cannot understand them. In this case, you will need to help the stronger one by taking part in the exam yourself, whilst giving as much opportunity as possible for the quiet person to join in if and when they can.
- If you stumble while you are reading the script or if you make a mistake, pause, apologise, go back to the beginning of the sentence and start again.