

IELTS GENERAL TRAINING

Listening

The four parts, prediction technique and the traps built into every recording

Ronacker Solutions · LaunchPad Career Toolkit

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1. The test

Thirty minutes of audio, forty questions, four parts — and the recording is played **once only**. The Listening test is identical for General Training and Academic candidates.

Part	What you hear	Typical task
Part 1	A conversation between two people in an everyday context	Booking a venue, joining a gym, arranging a delivery
Part 2	One person speaking in an everyday context	A tour introduction, a radio feature, facility instructions
Part 3	Up to four people discussing something educational	Students planning an assignment with a tutor
Part 4	One person delivering a lecture or talk	An academic monologue on a single subject

Difficulty climbs steadily. Parts 1 and 2 are where your reliable marks live — protect them. Part 4 is the hardest because there is no conversational repetition and no pause partway through.

Transfer time depends on your test format

Format	What happens at the end
Paper-based	Ten extra minutes to copy answers onto the answer sheet
Computer-delivered	Two minutes only — you type answers directly, so this is checking time, not transfer time

Find out which format you are sitting, now

It changes how you work. On paper, you write on the question booklet and copy across at the end — and you must budget attention for spelling during those ten minutes. On computer, your answer is committed as you type, so accuracy has to happen live.

2. Prediction — the technique that matters most

You are given time to look at the questions before each part begins. Most candidates read the questions passively. Use those seconds actively instead: decide what **kind** of answer each gap needs before you hear anything.

For every gap, decide three things

1. **What type of information?** A name, a number, a date, a place, a price, a material, a time.
2. **What part of speech?** Noun, verb, adjective, plural or singular.
3. **What is the word limit?** One word? Two? A number allowed as well?

PREDICTION IN PRACTICE

Gap: The deposit is _____ and must be paid within _____ days.

Before the audio starts you already know: gap one is a sum of money, so listen for a currency figure; gap two is a number, so listen for a numeral. You are now waiting for two specific shapes rather than trying to follow everything.

Underline the keywords around each gap too. Those are what the speaker will paraphrase just before giving the answer, and they act as your warning that the answer is about to arrive.

3. The traps

The correction trap

The most common trap in Parts 1 and 3. A speaker gives one answer and then changes it. The first figure is the distractor; the correction is the answer.

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE

"So that's Tuesday the fourteenth — oh no, sorry, the fourteenth is a public holiday. Let's say Thursday the sixteenth."

Answer: Thursday 16th. Candidates who write the first date they hear lose the mark.

Listen for the signal words

Actually, sorry, hang on, in fact, I mean, let me check, on second thoughts. Every one of these means a correction is coming. Train your ear to treat them as an alarm.

Spelling and names

- Names and addresses are spelled out letter by letter. Write the letters down as you hear them — do not try to hold them in your head.
- British and American spellings are both accepted, but be consistent.
- A correctly heard word with wrong spelling scores **zero**. Spelling is marked in Listening.
- The letters most often confused when spoken: **A / E / I, B / P / V, M / N, G / J, S / F.**

Numbers

You hear	Meaning
double four seven	447
treble two	222
oh / zero / nought	0
fifteen vs fifty	15 vs 50 — listen for the stress
a hundred and twenty	120

The fifteen-versus-fifty problem is worth drilling on its own. In *fifteen* the stress falls on the second syllable; in *fifty* it falls on the first.

Word limits and formatting

- *No more than two words and/or a number* means exactly that. Three words scores zero even if the meaning is correct.
- Do not add words that are already printed. If the paper says \$ before the gap, write only the figure.
- Plurals matter. If you hear *tickets*, write *tickets*.
- Capital letters are safe throughout — they are never penalised and they remove any doubt about proper nouns.

If you miss one, let it go

The single most damaging habit in Listening is staying with a missed answer. The recording does not wait, and while you agonise over question 12 you lose 13, 14 and 15 as well. Mark it, move your eyes to the next question, and come back during transfer time to guess.

4. Do's and don'ts

DO	DON'T
• Read ahead during every pause you are given • Predict the answer type before the audio starts • Write letters down as names are spelled out • Use capitals throughout • Check plurals and spelling in transfer time • Guess every blank — there is no penalty • Keep your eyes on the question you are currently expecting	• Do not stop to fix a missed answer while the audio runs • Do not write the first number you hear — wait for a correction • Do not exceed the word limit, ever • Do not leave any answer blank • Do not copy words already printed on the paper • Do not assume Part 1 is too easy to need attention • Do not change an answer in transfer time without a real reason

Training your ear

Test recordings use a spread of accents — British, Australian, New Zealand, North American and Canadian. If your exposure to English has been mainly Southern African, Australian and New Zealand accents will be the ones that catch you, and they are heavily represented.

- Listen to Australian and New Zealand radio for twenty minutes a day — ABC and RNZ both stream free.
- Watch material without subtitles first, then with, then without again.
- Practise dictation: play thirty seconds, write down every word, check against the transcript. This is slow and it works faster than anything else.
- Drill numbers and spelling separately — have someone read out phone numbers, prices and surnames while you write them.

How to practise

One full timed test a week, played once, no pausing, no rewinding. Then — and this is the part most candidates skip — replay the sections you got wrong with the transcript open, and find the exact moment the answer passed you. It is almost always a correction signal or a synonym you were not expecting.

Ready to practise properly?

Reading a guide tells you what to do. Marked practice tells you whether you are doing it. The Ronacker LaunchPad gives you full timed IELTS practice with band feedback on every answer — Writing marked against all four criteria, Speaking with a live examiner-style roleplay, and Reading and Listening scored instantly.

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