

Get Ready for IELTS Ice-breakers, short fillers and exam technique practice

These tasks make use of all four books and can be used to start a lesson, to end a lesson, or to take a break from the textbook. They will help students to develop the skills they need to pass the IELTS exam.

1. To encourage learners to communicate with each other:

Organise mingling activities. Give each learner a typical Part 1 Speaking exam question to ask other class members (for example: What do you do? Do you do any sports? Have you ever travelled abroad?). Instruct them to make brief notes of each respondent's answers as they circulate. Use the data they gather to make tables or charts for Task 1 writing practice.

2. To raise energy and make learning fun:

Create games using vocabulary from the unit. Words and their associated synonyms, antonyms or definitions can be used for:

- *Pelmanism*, a memory card game in which a pack of cards is spread out face down and players try to turn up matching pairs.
- *Snap!* a card game in which the players compete to call out the word 'snap' when they are able to match a card they hold with one turned over from a deck.

You can also use vocabulary sets to play *Noughts and Crosses*, in which learners take it in turns to select words in a row to define or use correctly in a sentence.

3. To get students used to working to time limits:

Exercises such as gap-filling passages or matching columns of items can be made more challenging by dividing learners into teams and placing strict time limits on activities. When you check answers, allocate a certain number of points to the fastest team but deduct points for incorrect responses. This will encourage learners to balance the need for speed with the need to be accurate, an important skill for IELTS.

4. To encourage learners to engage personally with a topic:

Set questions for small group discussion. For example, if they are reading a text or listening to a talk about an aging population, ask them to discuss questions such as:

- How do you feel about growing old?
- Do you think it's easier to be elderly nowadays than in the past?

Make sure that they give reasons for their opinions. Doing this regularly when they are practising reading and listening skills will help them with ideas for Writing task 2 and Speaking parts 2 and 3.

5. To create a more supportive learning community:

Ask learners to share with each other how they feel about different task types and any exam strategies they have used successfully in the past.

6. To encourage self-reflection:

- A.** Before checking the answers to exercises as a class, ask students to work in pairs to compare their responses. They must explain how they arrived at their answers and compare the strategies that they used. Where they've used different strategies, ask them if they can identify which was most successful.
- B.** Encourage learners to monitor their own learning by setting questions for reflection at the end of each lesson: What was the most useful thing you learned today? What do you think you need to work on next?

Learners could also be asked to produce a line graph showing how their confidence and/or motivation has changed over the course of their studies. This could be used as a stimulus for Task 1 writing practice.

7. To help learners think like examiners:

- A.** Get learners to test each other in pairs. You can begin with something simple, for example, giving each student a list of words from the previous unit to test their partner.
- B.** As they become more experienced, get learners involved in producing exam practice exercises for one another. For reading practice, for example, invite learners to write comprehension questions about a text for a partner. Start with simple short-answer comprehension questions, then move on to the more challenging tasks of writing 'true/false/not given' and multiple choice and questions. Point out examples of good distractors or good 'trick questions' to encourage learners to read closely and think like examiners.