

# IELTS

## 12 Master Principles of Test Preparation Academic & General

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IELTS  
SERIES

**IELTS 12 Master Principles of Test Preparation**  
**Academic & General**

by Matt McGinniss & Matt Cudmore

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## Introduction

By understanding the 12 Master Principles contained in this special report, you will be **better prepared** to transform your learning style and your attitude towards IELTS.

By acting on these principles, you will **accelerate** your skills in such a way that you will get a higher band score than you ever thought possible.

*You can do it, you have to do it, you will do it!*

So there is **no point** in being negative about IELTS.

IELTS is a test you must do, so see it as an *excellent opportunity* to improve your skills.

However, it goes deeper than that.

While these principles are fantastic for IELTS, keep in mind they will also be extremely helpful in your **professional life**, especially if you need English to advance your career.

In other words, by following principles outlined in this special report your **English** will improve. Your **confidence** will improve. Your **opportunities** will improve.

So let's get started...

## Master Principle # 1 - It's all about speed

IELTS is a test of **SPEED**.

You need to think **quickly**, make decisions **quickly** and write your answers **quickly**. In fact, you need to work fast in **ALL** sections of the exam.

In IELTS, **time is your enemy**. Time can make you stress out. Time can make you miss easy questions. Time can make you panic.

So what should you do about it? You need to develop your **IELTS time clock**. In other words, you need to know how fast to work in every situation.

If a **reading** question is **too hard**, you need to quickly make an intelligent guess and move on.

In **listening**, you need to quickly skim the information in the questions to get the main idea.

In **writing**, you need to plan an essay in a minute or two, which requires critical thinking at speed. Once you have a plan, you can write even faster than before because once you already have your ideas, you only need to think about sentence structure.

When **speaking**, you need to think quickly so you can increase your fluency. You don't have time for umm...ahh...umm. That's **NOT** what IELTS is about.

Use your **speed** on exam day, because if you are too slow and you start falling behind, the pressure will build up. You will have blown it.

**All over...just like that.**

Therefore, when you do practice tests, always time yourself with a stopwatch app on your smart phone.

When you speak, **record yourself** and see how long you speak for each time.

Get to know IELTS time.

**Learn it by heart.**

## Master Principle # 2 - The test format is predictable

Okay, now it's time for the **good** news. **Great** news in fact. The test is PREDICTABLE.

*Firstly, what do we mean by the word 'predictable'?*

Something is predictable when it follows the same format, the same structure. Something is predictable when you can rely on the way it will behave.

### Every single time!

The IELTS test is just like that. It's completely **predictable**. It follows the same patterns and structures.

Think about it. This gives you a **HUGE ADVANTAGE**, because it means you know what to expect.

You can **plan**. You can **prepare**.

You can **learn** the **structure** by heart.

You **know** exactly how much **time** you have for **answering** each question.

Most of all, you know how the exam **feels** and how you should spend **every minute**.

To avoid surprises on exam day, you should prepare by doing enough **practice tests** so that you know exactly **what** to expect next and **which strategy** you should use to succeed.

Once again, the fact that IELTS is predictable is a **HUGE ADVANTAGE**.

**Use this advantage to lift your scores.**

## Master Principle # 3 - We live in world of change

As you prepare for IELTS, take time each day to ask yourself these two questions: '**why** do things **change**?', and '**what** are the **results** of these **changes**'?

Why are these questions important? Because the world is a place of great change. *Enormous* change in fact. Changes in culture, changes in fashion, changes in economies and even changes in climate patterns.

Change can be **good**, change can be **bad**. Change can create new opportunities or destroy lives.

Change occurs when a baby becomes a child and a child becomes an adult.

Take a moment to think about it. What are the differences between a baby and an adult? There are thousands of differences!

**Change is all around us.  
So change is a big theme in IELTS!**

So many **reading** passages are about change.

So many **letters, reports** and **essays** are about change.

So many **speaking tests** are about change in ways of life, changes in habits or changes in attitudes. Change over time, change in culture, often because of globalisation.

As you prepare for IELTS, consider the changes around **you**. How are some things different from what they were ten years ago?

How have **you** changed? How will you change in the **future**?

And most importantly, for now at least, how will you be able to **answer questions** about change when it comes time for your IELTS test?

## **Master Principle # 4 - We live in a 'global village'**

We often hear Planet Earth being called a **global village**. But what does that mean exactly?

It means we are all connected. It means, in many cases, we have the same needs, the same problems, the same desires. No matter which country we come from.

It means we are all people sharing this **amazing planet** and that we are influenced by forces all around us. Do you have much knowledge about issues facing the global village?

So what are these global issues? What **influences** all of us? Here are a few of the topics that you need to know about:

**Science & Technology**

**Internet & Media**

**Global Cultural & Sporting Events**

**Famous People & Entertainment**

**Growing Populations & Environment**

## Master Principle # 5 - Critical thinking will make your score fly!

In many ways this is the hardest principle for many candidates.

**Critical thinking** involves using a number of skills. The skill of predicting, the skill of **evaluating**, the skill of **judging** and ultimately, the skill of **forming an opinion**.

*That's right – your opinion – what do **YOU** think?*

For some people, these skills come naturally. For others, they need practice. If you don't have opinions, you need to start getting some. **FAST!**

Why is this so vital for IELTS? Generally speaking, in English speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the ability to have original thoughts is **highly respected**.

In many **jobs**, having **opinions** and the ability to 'think outside the box' is **expected**.

The world is full of problems.

We need critical thinking can **solve** these problems.

When it comes to university, students are **expected** to think critically, otherwise they are not participating fully in the learning experience.

This may be *different* from your country. In many, more traditional countries, the values of respect and honour are more highly regarded than critical thinking. Does that sound familiar to you?

If it does, you need to start thinking differently if you want to succeed in IELTS. Consider the following questions that can be found in IELTS:

***What do you think the gap will be between rich and poor people in the future?***

***What can be done to solve the environmental issues facing your country?***

***How has the internet influenced the way children interact?***

Do you get the idea? These are questions that require **CRITICAL THINKING** for their answers.

So how do you get the critical thinking skills required?

One thing you do is start **questioning** the **world** you see around you.

For instance, if you read a story about a rise in childhood obesity, ask yourself:

***Why is this happening?***

***Where is this happening?***

***For how long has this been happening?***

***Is this really happening, or is this some study of just a few hundred cases in one location?***

In fact, you can ask questions like these about all sorts of issues. If you still need to find more questions, start using the W/H questions:

**What - Where - When - Why - Who - How**

## **Master Principle # 6 - Focus on details**

Some people are **big picture** thinkers, while others are **detailed-orientated**.

In IELTS, as in many jobs these days, you need to be both if you want to be successful.

Focussing on **details** means being accurate with **spelling**. It means knowing the **rules of punctuation** and applying them in every sentence that you write.

It means **listening** for time details, price details or temperature details.

In the workplace, this is called being professional. In other words, it means writing an email with **NO** errors. It means arriving on time and completing your duties.

So take care when working on IELTS. Don't do an average job.

Be the best you can be.

Do a **GREAT** job by focussing on the details!

## Master Principle # 7 - Read, read and read some more

Master Principle # 7 is actually pretty simple:

**Stop watching TV – start reading.**  
**Stop playing computer games – start reading.**  
**Stop surfing the internet for no reason – start reading.**

Deep learning comes from reading. You may have heard this from your parents. You would have heard this from your teachers.

Perhaps you have never been a strong reader. Perhaps you sometimes read stories or books in your first language, but never in English. Perhaps you actually **HATE** reading. Well, that's fine. But don't expect to get a good score on IELTS.

You're an adult now. **Nobody cares** if you don't read. The people who operate IELTS don't care. To them you are just a number. You're another person who has paid good money to sit their test.

And if you don't read, you are not alone. Alongside you are the hundreds and thousands of other people, even **millions of people**, who also **don't read**. Do you think they have any chance of doing well on IELTS?

Because really, at the end of the day, if you can read effectively, you can get a great score on IELTS. Why are we so confident about this?

### **Because reading affects everything!**

It affects the way you understand instructions. It affects your ability to analyse the question on the writing section. It affects your ability to read the card in section two of the speaking.

Reading has a **MASSIVE** impact on your ability to score well in listening, because there is so much specific information you need to read on the question sheets.

As for the Reading section of the IELTS exam, the speed in which you have to read is incredibly fast. You need to **skim**, **scan** and do **detailed** reading in order to answer the questions. Otherwise you are toast.

So if you are serious about IELTS, and I assume you are because you are reading these words right now, you need to start making a **REAL EFFORT** to read more.

What to read? Read **anything** and **everything**. Read the newspaper and read current affairs magazines such as a TIME and Newsweek. Read reports and books and websites that you find at work. Read a novel, read a story to your kids or to children that you know.

**Just read! In English, of course.**

## Master Principle # 8 - Think about the words around you

The world is full of lessons, and a great amount of the information we gain comes through our **listening**.

In fact, when you think about it, listening is the sense that directs our attention. When you hear an unexpected noise you **turn around**, you **focus** on it. You try to figure it out.

Pay attention to what you hear, but especially, pay attention to ... **words**.

Words are the engines of language, the heart of IELTS. Listen for them, listen to them, clarify them, write them down, think about them.

Learn words. Learn to **spell** words that you have had problems spelling in the past. Think about words – are they nouns, adjectives or verbs? Learn to **love** finding new words.

Because you never know when you might need to **rely** on one of these little words, especially when the IELTS time is ticking and the pressure is really on.

## Master Principle # 9 - Strategies will make you a winner, so use them!

In IELTS, **strategies are everything**. Strategies are your weapons that will help you win a glorious personal victory in the IELTS war.

You are probably familiar with the phrase **work smart, not hard**. Yes, that's true for IELTS. And what it means in this case is that you need to work smart by using **strategies**.

What do we mean by **strategies**? Strategies include the way to approach your various parts of the exam.

**Strategies** show you how to do the listening test, the reading test, the writing test and the speaking test.

But they are **more** than that. You need to get specific with your strategies.

You need strategies to help you:

- Know the question types
- Know what the instructions look like
- Know how information changes will sound in the listening
- Know how to use synonyms correctly for writing and speaking

Here's a real world story to help illustrate the point. A study was conducted in Australia recently, whereby a group of university-educated **native English speakers** were given IELTS tests.

Can you guess how they scored on the IELTS band scale of 1 – 9?

On the reading and listening tests they scored between 6 and 7. Can you believe this? Why didn't they score **9** if they were native speakers?

The answer is simple. They didn't know **HOW** to take the test. They had **no** strategies. They simply had **no way** of knowing what to expect on the test and how to answer the questions.

**So don't make the same mistake.**

Be prepared! Get to know the **IELTS strategies** and give your scores a serious boost.

### **Master Principle # 10 - Work hard...oh yes...work very hard**

In Master Principle # 9 we said work smart, not hard. Well that wasn't actually true. In IELTS, to be truly successful, you need to **work smart AND work hard**.

Think of IELTS as a **fantastic opportunity**. The ultimate language challenge, your place to learn all those language rules you never quite picked up in the past.

If you enrolled in a language class, studying IELTS full-time for 12 weeks, you would be expected to lift **one full band** of the IELTS in all skills over that period of time.

That might be fine if you have three months to dedicate to nothing but IELTS, but for most of us, **that's not the world we live in**. We have to pay bills, we have social commitments and we have jobs that demand so much of our time and energy.

Sure you can take the full time class if you must. But we don't think it's necessary. In fact, we think sitting in a classroom for three months can make you **lazy**. Because you know who's doing most of the work? **The teacher**.

That's right. The teacher is working hard, **very hard** to make the lessons fit with the school curriculum, to use the books the school has deemed appropriate, to set up the wonderful IELTS universe that is appropriate for all twenty students or more.

Can you see anything **wrong** here?

The focus isn't on *you*. The focus is on the *teacher*, which is exactly where the focus **shouldn't** be.

The focus should be on **YOU**. You are the focus because **you** are the test taker.

### **YOU AND YOU ALONE!**

Who cares what happens in any old classroom? When it counts, on exam day, it is you who must face the music. You who must think **fast** and **strategically** and **critically**.

IELTS requires an enormous amount of **focus** and **energy** if you are to achieve a significantly higher score than what you currently have.

So work on it. Work on it every day. Read every day. Listen to information every day. Make predictions every day. Challenge yourself. See how far you can actually go.

If you think you are tired at 10pm, think again, keep going until 10.30pm, or 11pm. Squeeze that **extra bit of study** out of yourself, even if it's the hardest thing you've ever done.

That's what **Olympic athletes** do. It's time for you to do it as well!

## **Master Principle # 11 - Trust yourself and the knowledge you have**

### **YOU are an intelligent human being!**

You are an incredibly *complex* biological wonder, totally wired to communicate and decode meanings and messages.

That's what you are, a **communicating machine**. Otherwise you wouldn't have survived this far in life.

Think about it.

Every day you send tens of thousands of **signals**, from lifting your eyebrows to writing an email. You have the unique human ability to perform **incredibly complicated tasks**. You have ancient knowledge that has been passed down over the generations and you have an awareness of an incredible range of cultural signals and meanings.

### **So trust yourself!**

**Trust** what you know, **trust** what you think, **trust** what you did in the past to get you to the position you are in now.

When you start **trusting yourself**, you will find your answers come quicker, the problems become a little easier. With **confidence** comes **correct answers**. So trust yourself.

## Master Principle # 12 - Have a positive attitude, always

**Question:** What do **successful people** have in common?

**Answer:** They always stay **POSITIVE**.

Successful people stay **positive** when they receive bad news. *Positive* when they get knocked down. *Positive* when they face a tough situation in life, day after day after day.

Like we said at the start: there is **no point** in being negative about IELTS.

This is a test you must do, so see it as *excellent opportunity* to increase your **knowledge**, increase your **English skills** and increase your English **language confidence**.

Learn to how to take the IELTS test.

Use IELTS for good.

Use IELTS to prepare for the **NEXT STAGE** of your life.

## More Information

You have reached the end of this special report. We thank you for taking the time to read it and we wish you all the best for your next test.

For more information about IELTS, including professional online courses, please visit:

<http://www.englishtec.com>

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