

FREE RESOURCE · GRAMMAR

IELTS grammar

In IELTS Writing and Speaking, grammar is judged on range and accuracy. Range means a mix of sentence types, such as simple, complex and conditional sentences. Accuracy means how often your sentences are free from errors, and whether errors stop the reader from understanding you.

What to know

How grammar is judged

In both the Writing and the Speaking test, grammar is one of four criteria. It is called Grammatical Range and Accuracy. Your grammar is judged by the overall pattern in what you produce, not by a count of every slip. Two questions matter.

The foundations: sentence structure

Before any advanced structure, make sure every sentence is complete. A complete sentence has a subject and a main verb. Check for missing verbs, missing subjects and sentences that are really two sentences joined by a comma.

- Complete sentences with a subject and a verb
- Subject-verb agreement, including after phrases like the number of
- Plural and uncountable nouns, such as information and advice
- Articles: a, an, the or no article
- Correct prepositions after common verbs and adjectives

Tenses and time

Time control is one of the clearest signs of accuracy. In Writing Task 1 for the Academic test, you must match the tense to the time in the data: past simple for past dates, present perfect for change up to now, and future forms for predictions. In Task 2, the present simple is the main tense, and the present perfect is useful for recent changes.

Building range with complex sentences

Range is not about rare words or long sentences. It is about using different types of structure on purpose. A good set to master includes subordinate clauses (although, because, while), relative clauses (who, which, that), conditionals (if, unless), the passive voice for processes and general statements, and comparatives for Task 1.

- *Many people travel by car. · Although many people travel by car, public transport is cheaper.*
- *Cities are growing. They face new problems. · Cities, which are growing quickly, face new problems.*

Grammar in speaking is different from grammar in writing

Speech is faster and less planned, so some small slips and self-repairs are natural. What matters is control. Can you start a longer sentence and finish it? Can you talk about the past, the present and the future without losing the tense? Do you use because, although and if in a natural way?

Exercises

1. The number of students _____ risen steadily.
 - a. have
 - b. has
 - c. are
2. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) Many young people (2) prefers (3) to study (4) online.
3. She works as _____ engineer in a hospital.
 - a. some
 - b. an
 - c. a
4. Begin with Although. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): was difficult, / I enjoyed it. / Although / but / the course
5. Correct this: *The informations are useful.*
6. If the government _____ more money, more schools would open.
 - a. invests
 - b. invested
 - c. will invest
7. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) Last year, (2) the company (3) build (4) a new factory.
8. Cities are growing fast, _____ pollution is also increasing.
 - a. which
 - b. and
 - c. despite
9. Fewer people _____ cars in the city now.
 - a. driving
 - b. drives
 - c. drive
10. Correct this: *I am agree with this opinion.*

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/ielts-grammar/practice/

IELTS tip. For Writing, aim to have every sentence complete and add two or three complex structures that you control, such as a conditional, a relative clause and a contrast clause. For Speaking, answer in the tense of the question and use a longer sentence when you have a reason or an example to give.

FOR TEACHERS · GRAMMAR

IELTS grammar

AIM	Learners understand how range and accuracy are judged and build a short personal list of structures to control.
TIME	35 minutes
LEVEL	B1 to B2 (IELTS 5 to 6.5)
MATERIALS	This worksheet, one copy per learner; the free online practice for the audio

Warm-up

Write two answers to the same question, one made of short simple sentences and one with a mix of structures. Ask learners which shows more range, and which has more risk.

Lesson steps

1. Introduce range and accuracy using the two sample answers, and have learners underline the different structures.
2. Learners write a short paragraph on a Task 2 topic and swap with a partner, who marks each sentence as complete or not.
3. Each learner builds an error log with three categories (tense, agreement and articles, sentence structure) and adds two examples from their own paragraph.
4. As a class, choose three structures to practise this week and write one example of each.

Extension

Record a one-minute Speaking Part 1 answer and transcribe it. Underline each tense and structure, then rewrite one sentence to add range.

Answer key

1. b) has. The subject is the number, which is singular, so has is correct.
2. Part 2: *prefers* → **prefer**. People is plural, so the verb has no s.
3. b) an. Engineer begins with a vowel sound, so the article is an.
4. Although the course was difficult, I enjoyed it. Although starts a clause of contrast. We do not add but in the main clause.
5. The information is useful. Information is uncountable, so it has no plural and takes a singular verb.
6. b) invested. A second conditional uses the past simple in the if clause and would in the result.
7. Part 3: *build* → **built**. Last year needs the past simple, and the past form of build is built.
8. b) and. And joins two clauses. Despite needs a noun phrase, and which would need a different structure.

9. c) drive. People is plural, so the verb has no s.

10. I agree with this opinion. Agree is a verb, so it does not need am.

Questions learners often ask

How is grammar judged in IELTS? Grammar is judged on range, which is the variety of structures you use, and accuracy, which is how free your sentences are from errors. Both matter.

Do I need advanced grammar to do well? You need a mix of structures that you can use accurately. Advanced structures help only when you control them.

Is one grammar mistake a problem? No. The overall pattern of your language matters more than one slip. A single slip matters much less than the same error repeated in every paragraph.

Which grammar should I study first? Start with complete sentences, tenses, agreement and articles, then add complex sentences and conditionals.

Sources

- Swan, M. (2016). Practical English Usage (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Carter, R. and McCarthy, M. (2006). Cambridge Grammar of English. Cambridge University Press.

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