

## Teaching IELTS: Skills and techniques to link English speaking and writing



### Videos

1. Making the IELTS exam clear and familiar
2. Preparing the students for writing and speaking in IELTS
3. Making students familiar with the language features in the IELTS Task 1
4. IELTS teaching techniques: Get students to compile their own list of questions
5. IELTS teaching techniques: Assisting students with common difficulties in speaking and writing for IELTS
6. IELTS teaching techniques: Using carrier nouns+ positive and negative adjectives for organisation
7. IELTS teaching techniques: Get students to link, organise and transfer across modules

Links to the videos above can be found at: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/teaching-ielts-skills-techniques-link-english-speaking-writing>

### Introduction

Sam McCarter says that the great secret behind helping students achieve good scores in IELTS writing and speaking is to make what is expected of them familiar and clear to them. What do you think? Is this easier said than done?

In this engaging, concise seminar, Sam McCarter outlines the key characteristics of the IELTS exam and the common features of each of the IELTS papers. The talk provides several tips and strategies for English language teachers helping their students prepare for the IELTS examination.

### Session summary and objectives

In this talk about teaching IELTS, Sam McCarter outlines the common problems that English learners have with both the writing paper and the speaking exam, along with potential solutions. For example, Sam advises how becoming aware of the use of nouns in questions and texts can provide a key to preparing your students for writing and speaking for IELTS.

Watch this seminar for ideas on how to teach your learners to:

- Use 'carrier' nouns to produce better English discourse in speaking and listening.

- Become aware of nouns and noun phrases, to build learners' vocabulary in interesting and meaningful ways.

### Who is this session for?

All teachers who teach IELTS.

### About the speaker

Sam McCarter is a full time ELT writer and teacher; 11 of his 19 published books are on IELTS. Check out Sam McCarter's other seminars recorded for the British Council Seminar Series.

### Before you watch

If you are new to IELTS, we recommend you familiarise yourself with the four IELTS papers. You can find out more at: <http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/teachielts>

If you are an experienced IELTS teacher, consider the challenges that your students face with the IELTS writing exam. When you watch the seminar, compare your thoughts to the issues that Sam McCarter talks about.

### Real life practice

Review the selection of tasks below, that Sam McCarter suggests in this seminar. Try them out in class.

### Compare and Contrast Task

- Following a lesson focusing on the language of comparing and contrasting, encourage students to create short revision cards with comparison and contrast language.
- Ask students individually to make a list of the different ways they know to compare and contrast items/ideas.
- Then ask them to compare this list with a partner and then with other students.
- Initially, ask them to do this without reference to any books to see how much they can come up with.
- Once students start speaking with each other, the chances are they will trigger different ways of comparing and contrasting, bringing in more complex items such as: as ... as ..., not as ... as ... and adverbial phrases such as By contrast/In stark contrast to this.
- Collate this information on the board, dividing it into different categories.
- Then compile a class master list electronically or on paper for each student to access and copy and to call up in later classes.
- To make the process even more student-centred, a student or students can be asked to create the class list for the whole class.
- The contents of the list can grow as the students' exposure to comparison and contrast language grows.

**Note:** The temptation is to give the students a list without them engaging with it. By having them create it themselves and discuss it, we are making them much more conscious of the language that they know, but don't use. The next task is to encourage students to use what they know.

### Top tips

1. Study the four papers in the IELTS exam and become comfortably familiar with the common features they share.
2. Become familiar with the 'learning frames' that Sam McCarter refers to and build them into your

IELTS lesson plans.

3. Train your students for the IELTS exam. Create a bag of tips and techniques to help them and then practise, practise, practise these. Sam McCarter provides several useful ones.
4. Focus on noun phrases. Build language around collocations and word families.
5. Familiarise yourself with the Academic Keyword List and refer to it when helping your students to build up their knowledge of important vocabulary for the IELTS exam.

### Staffroom discussion

1. Which of the activities that Sam McCarter describes have you tried out? Which ones do you like that work well?
2. Have you any additional tips you can share with other teachers on how to prepare students for the IELTS exam?

### Downloadable resources and further resources

General information about the IELTS exam:

British Council Take IELTS - <http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/teachielts>

### Lexical priming

M. HOEY (2005) Lexical priming: a new theory of words and language. London: Routledge.

HUANG, LI-SZU AGNES (2007) M.Hoey, Lexical priming: a new theory of words and language'. Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, Volume 30, Number 1, 2007 Monash University ePress.

Available from <http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/aral/article/viewFile/1945/2328>

### Academic Keyword List

Centre for English Corpus Linguistics (2014) Academic Keyword List. [Online] Université Catholique de Louvain. Available from: <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-372126.html> [15 September 2014].

PAQUOT, M. (2010). Academic Vocabulary in Learner Writing: From Extraction to Analysis. London & New-York: Continuum, 29-63.