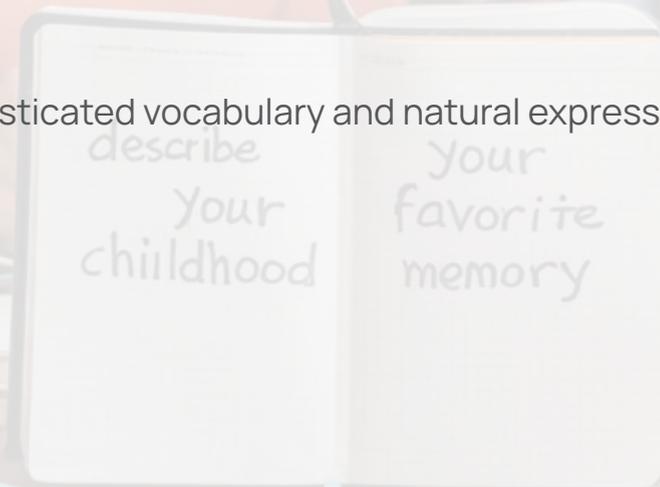


100 Essential Words and Phrases for Band 7-9 Success

A comprehensive guide to sophisticated vocabulary and natural expressions for IELTS Speaking success



How to Use This Guide

This guide contains 100 useful words and phrases extracted from detailed analysis of over 50 mock IELTS Speaking tests featuring Band 7-9 responses.

We analyzed these videos and compiled the most common words and phrases that would be genuinely useful for IELTS students, focusing on language that demonstrates lexical range, grammatical complexity, and natural fluency that examiners assess for high band scores.

Each phrase serves a specific communicative function to help you structure coherent, sophisticated responses.

Source Material: The phrases and examples in this guide come from real high-scoring IELTS Speaking test performances. You can access many of these videos here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4715CJ0li8&list=PLWWR_9t3vo3OtrmF3BV0CUDTBs83i4iAo

 **Important:** Don't memorize these phrases or force them into every answer. Use them naturally when they genuinely fit your intended meaning. Authentic, conversational language often scores higher than forced academic phrases.

Complete List of 100 Essential Phrases

Sophisticated Opinion Expressions

Personal Perspectives

- From my perspective...
- I'm inclined to believe...
- It strikes me that...
- What I find particularly interesting is...

Balanced Views

- I have mixed feelings about...
- I'm of the opinion that...
- To be perfectly honest...
- If I had to choose...

Strong Positions

- I'd argue that...
- In my experience...

Natural Thinking Time & Hesitation

These phrases help you buy time naturally while formulating your thoughts, demonstrating authentic conversational flow that examiners value.

Opening Responses

- That's an interesting question...
- Let me think about that...
- Off the top of my head...
- Now that you mention it...
- Come to think of it...

Thoughtful Pauses

- Well, let me see...
- How should I put this...
- That's a tough one...
- I haven't really thought about it before, but...
- If I'm being completely honest...

Advanced Linking & Cohesion

These sophisticated connectors demonstrate grammatical range and help create coherent, well-structured responses that flow naturally from one idea to the next.



Adding Information

- Furthermore
- Moreover
- In addition to that
- What's more

Contrasting Ideas

- Nevertheless
- On the contrary
- Having said that
- That being said
- On the flip side

Showing Results

- Consequently

Expressing Degrees & Nuance

These phrases help you express subtle differences in meaning and avoid absolute statements, showing sophisticated language control.

Partial Agreement

- To some extent
- To a certain degree
- More or less

General Statements

- By and large
- For the most part
- Relatively speaking

Degree Modifiers

- Comparatively
- Substantially
- Considerably
- Marginally

Sophisticated Descriptive Language

These adjectives demonstrate lexical range and help you describe concepts, people, and situations with precision and sophistication.



Innovation & Quality

- **Compelling**
- Innovative
- Exceptional
- Remarkable



Time & Trends

- Contemporary
- Conventional
- Prevalent



Character & Style

- Authentic
- Distinctive
- Sustainable

Explaining & Clarifying

These phrases help you elaborate on your ideas and ensure your meaning is clear, demonstrating communicative competence.



Rephrasing

- What I mean by that is...
- To put it another way...
- In other words...



Focusing

- The point I'm trying to make is...
- What I'm getting at is...
- The way I see it...



Elaborating

- Let me elaborate on that...
- To clarify...
- More specifically...
- That is to say...

Comparing & Contrasting

Essential for Part 3 discussions where you need to analyze different viewpoints and present balanced arguments.

Showing Similarities

- In comparison with...
- Similarly
- Likewise

Showing Differences

- As opposed to...
- Unlike...
- In contrast
- Whereas
- On the other hand
- Alternatively
- Rather than

Topic-Specific Vocabulary

These contemporary phrases frequently appear in IELTS Speaking topics and demonstrate awareness of current issues.



Work & Career

- Work-life balance
- Career prospects



Society & Culture

- Cultural diversity
- Social media influence



Environment & Technology

- Environmental impact
- Technological advancement



Development & Services

- Educational opportunities
- Economic development
- Public transportation
- Healthcare system

Giving Examples & Evidence

These phrases help you support your arguments with specific examples, demonstrating your ability to develop ideas coherently.

Introducing Examples

- For instance
- Take... for example
- A case in point would be...
- To illustrate this...

Demonstrating Patterns

- This is particularly true when...
- This manifests itself in...

1

2

3

Showing Evidence

- This is evident in...
- A perfect example of this is...
- You can see this in...
- Evidence of this can be found...

Concluding & Summarizing

Perfect for wrapping up your responses and showing you can bring ideas together coherently.

Weighing Options

- All things considered...
- Taking everything into account...
- On balance...

Final Thoughts

- The bottom line is...
- Ultimately
- In conclusion
- To sum up...

Overall Assessment

- Overall
- At the end of the day...
- When all is said and done...

Detailed Analysis: 16 Phrases Found in Actual Band 8-9 Responses

These phrases appear exactly in real IELTS Speaking test transcripts from high-scoring candidates

1. "To be honest..."

Purpose: Introducing a frank opinion or admitting something

Real IELTS example: "To be honest, I don't think that I have a healthy diet. I usually eat whatever is available."

Video source: IELTS Speaking Practice Test- Perfect Band 9

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nrG6SHM-rY>

How you can use it:

- "To be honest, I'm not really a morning person, so I find it difficult to wake up early for work."
- "To be honest, I think social media has more negative effects than positive ones on young people."
- "To be honest, I've never really enjoyed cooking, but I'm trying to learn."

✔ **Why it works:** Shows authenticity and willingness to admit personal weaknesses or unpopular opinions.

2. "For instance..." / "For example..."

Purpose: Providing specific examples to support your point

Real IELTS example: "For example, if you're going to the office you probably want something bigger that can fit your laptop, your phone, paperwork—everything that you might need during the day."

Video source: Band 9.0 IELTS Practice Speaking Exam

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJJyilEPwpk>

How you can use it:

- "I love trying different cuisines. For instance, last week I tried Ethiopian food for the first time."
- "Technology has changed education dramatically. For example, students can now attend lectures online from anywhere in the world."
- "Many young people are environmentally conscious. For instance, my friends always use reusable water bottles."

✔ **Why it works:** Demonstrates ability to support general statements with specific, relevant examples.

3. "On the other hand..."

Purpose: Presenting a contrasting viewpoint or different perspective

Real IELTS example: "Some people think that there shouldn't be any regulations maybe because they're advertisers and they want to sell more stuff. Other people think that they should be heavily regulated because of children."

Video source: Band 8.5 IELTS Practice Speaking Exam

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8Y5D3RMBes>

How you can use it:

- "Many people prefer city life because of the opportunities. On the other hand, I find countryside living much more peaceful."
- "Online shopping is convenient. On the other hand, you can't try things on before buying them."
- "Some students prefer studying alone. On the other hand, group study can be more motivating."

✔ **Why it works:** Shows ability to consider multiple perspectives and present balanced arguments.

4. "In other words..."

Purpose: Rephrasing or clarifying what you just said

Real IELTS example: "So, different clothes with different occasions, I suppose. In other words, I adapt my style based on the situation."

Video source: IELTS Speaking Mock Test - Band 8

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDv9njERj0s>

How you can use it:

- "I'm quite introverted. In other words, I prefer spending time alone rather than in large groups."
- "The weather affects my mood significantly. In other words, sunny days make me much happier."
- "I believe in work-life balance. In other words, your job shouldn't consume your entire life."

✔ **Why it works:** Demonstrates ability to rephrase and clarify ideas, showing lexical flexibility.

5. "Similarly..."

Purpose: Comparing similar situations or drawing parallels

Real IELTS example: "So we had a good relationship and like I felt like she could understand me. Similarly, when I teach others, I try to understand their perspective."

Video source: IELTS Speaking Band 8.5 - Almost Perfect

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuNgt9Zjh4Y>

How you can use it:

- "My brother loves playing football. Similarly, I'm passionate about basketball."
- "Learning a language requires daily practice. Similarly, developing any skill needs consistent effort."
- "Many adults struggle with technology. Similarly, elderly people often find smartphones confusing."

✔ **Why it works:** Shows ability to make connections and comparisons between different ideas or situations.

6. "Personally..."

Purpose: Expressing your individual opinion or preference

Real IELTS example: "Personally, I don't think someone should be forced but as individuals, we should be aware enough of what not to wear in an official setting."

How you can use it:

- "Personally, I think children should learn to cook at a young age."
- "Personally, I prefer reading physical books rather than e-books."
- "Personally, I believe that travel is the best form of education."

✔ **Why it works:** Clearly signals that you're giving a personal opinion, which is exactly what IELTS examiners want to hear.

7. "Obviously..."

Purpose: Stating something that seems clear or logical (use sparingly)

Real IELTS example: "Dogs for obvious reasons—you can keep them as pets."

How you can use it:

- "Obviously, parents want the best education for their children."
- "Obviously, regular exercise is important for maintaining good health."
- "Obviously, learning a second language takes time and practice."

 **Why it works:** Shows logical thinking, but be careful not to overuse it or sound condescending.

8. "Actually..."

Purpose: Correcting, adding surprising information, or emphasizing a point

Real IELTS example: "Actually, recently I did receive flowers and I can't talk enough about flowers. I love everything about them."

How you can use it:

- "I thought I'd hate living abroad, but actually, I love it."
- "Actually, I've been learning Spanish for three years now."
- "Many people think teenagers don't read, but actually, young adult novels are extremely popular."

✔ **Why it works:** Natural discourse marker that adds emphasis and shows genuine, unscripted thinking.

9. "In fact..."

Purpose: Adding supporting information or emphasizing truth

Real IELTS example: "In fact, even when I'm going on a walk or a run I always have the map on my hand so I can just generally wander around."

How you can use it:

- "I enjoy cooking. In fact, I spend about two hours every Sunday preparing meals for the week."
- "Many people think teenagers don't read. In fact, young adult novels are extremely popular."
- "Public transport is efficient here. In fact, most people don't even own cars."

✔ **Why it works:** Adds weight to your argument by providing additional supporting evidence.

10. "Basically..."

Purpose: Summarizing or simplifying a complex idea

Real IELTS example: "Basically, just the look of excitement on her face when she got this because she was taking a loan to do her MBA and we effectively cut her loan by half."

How you can use it:

- "The course covers many topics, but basically, it's about understanding human behavior."
- "There are many reasons I chose this university, but basically, it has the best program for my field."
- "The problem is complex, but basically, we need more funding for education."

✔ **Why it works:** Shows ability to distill complex information into simple, understandable terms.

11. "Generally..."

Purpose: Making broad statements or talking about usual situations

Real IELTS example: "Generally speaking, I love Netflix—you have all the options you want."

How you can use it:

- "Generally, I prefer warm weather, though I do enjoy winter sports."
- "Generally speaking, people in my country are very family-oriented."
- "Generally, I find that older movies have better storylines than modern ones."

✔ **Why it works:** Shows ability to make generalizations while leaving room for exceptions.

12. "Specifically..."

Purpose: Being precise or giving exact details

Real IELTS example: "The mountains specifically—I always handpick locations which have mountains."

How you can use it:

- "I love music, specifically jazz and blues from the 1960s."
- "The program focuses on business skills, specifically marketing and finance."
- "I enjoy outdoor activities, specifically hiking and rock climbing."

✔ **Why it works:** Demonstrates precision in language and ability to be specific about preferences.

13. "Particularly..."

Purpose: Emphasizing something special or noteworthy

Real IELTS example: "It's particularly true when you get to watch it as soon as it comes out."

How you can use it:

- "I enjoy all sports, particularly swimming and tennis."
- "The weather was beautiful, particularly in the evenings when we could eat outside."
- "I like all kinds of food, particularly spicy Asian cuisine."

✔ **Why it works:** Shows sophisticated vocabulary choice over simpler words like "especially."

14. "Definitely..."

Purpose: Expressing strong agreement or certainty

Real IELTS example: "Definitely, it's one of my favorite things to do. I actually love nature."

How you can use it:

- "Would I recommend this course? Definitely. It changed my perspective completely."
- "Definitely, I think children should learn at least one foreign language."
- "Will I continue this hobby? Definitely—it's become a huge part of my life."

✔ **Why it works:** Shows confidence in your opinions and strong conviction.

15. "Absolutely..."

Purpose: Expressing complete agreement or strong emphasis

Real IELTS example: "Absolutely. I think there's lots of repressed emotions and stress that come out during our dreams."

How you can use it:

- "Do you think education should be free? Absolutely. Everyone deserves equal opportunities."
- "Absolutely, I believe travel broadens your understanding of different cultures."
- "Should parents be involved in their children's education? Absolutely."

✔ **Why it works:** Even stronger than "definitely"—shows complete certainty and conviction.

16. "Ultimately..."

Purpose: Introducing your final conclusion or the most important point

Real IELTS example: "Ultimately, I realized that all this became really useful for me to gain all the skills that I needed."

How you can use it:

- "There are pros and cons to both approaches. Ultimately, I think the decision depends on individual circumstances."
- "We discussed many solutions, but ultimately, the problem requires government action."
- "Ultimately, I believe that education is the key to solving most social problems."

✔ **Why it works:** Perfect for Part 3 discussions where you need to present a final, considered opinion.

Tips for Natural Usage



Don't force it

Use these phrases only when they naturally fit your intended meaning



Practice in context

Try using them in practice responses, not in isolation



Listen for rhythm

Native speakers use these phrases with natural intonation



Vary your choices

Don't use the same phrases repeatedly in one response



Focus on meaning

The phrase should help express your idea, not complicate it

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Overusing academic phrases

Sounding too formal can be unnatural

Mixing registers

Don't combine very informal and very formal language

Ignoring context

Some phrases work better in Part 3 than Part 1

Memorizing chunks

Phrases should sound natural, not rehearsed

Forgetting intonation

Practice how these phrases sound, not just how they look

Ready to Take Your IELTS Speaking to the Next Level?

This vocabulary guide gives you the foundation, but achieving your target IELTS score requires comprehensive preparation, expert feedback, and proven strategies.

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IELTS Vocabulary Improvement Plan

Master the art of expanding your English vocabulary through a proven three-step system designed specifically for IELTS success. This comprehensive guide will transform how you learn, retain, and use new words effectively.

The 3-Step Process to Vocabulary Mastery

Studies have shown that the number one way for learners to improve their vocabulary is through reading and listening to genuine sources of English.

01

Read and Listen

Immerse yourself in authentic English content from sources you genuinely enjoy and find interesting.

02

Record

You must record any new words you hear or read. There are lots of ways to do this, so that you will remember them effectively.

03

Review

It is essential that you regularly review these new words and phrases in order to retain them in your memory.

Reading: Your Foundation for Success

Spot new words or phrases

When you see a new word or phrase, underline it or write it down. Then guess what the words mean before writing them down in your notebook.

Guess

Guess what the words mean before writing them down in your notebook.

Use free resources

There are millions of free blogs, websites, news sites, and eBooks for you to choose from. See the guide at the end for recommendations.

Read every day

Make reading in English part of your daily routine and you will soon improve.

Listening: Expand Your Vocabulary on the Go



Listen to something you love

Just like reading, you will learn much more if you listen to something you enjoy. If you like football, listen to football commentary or shows. If you like fashion, listen to a podcast about the latest trends. When you hear a new word or phrase, write it down.



Use Free Resources

YouTube has billions of hours of clips for you to listen to. Simply search for things you are interested in and listen. Podcasts are also a great way to improve your vocabulary and listening skills. Again, they are free. These are just a couple of examples from many.



Listen on the go

Put your earbuds in and listen to your favourite podcast while you walk, work out, travel or work. The possibilities are endless. There will always be time for you to listen. You can then write down your new words or phrases when you get home.

Capture Your Learning

1

Buy a notebook

It does not need to be an expensive notebook. Anything that allows you to record lots of new words or phrases is good.

2

Use your phone

There are a huge number of apps, like Memrise, that allow you to record lists.

3

Add things to help you remember

Don't just write the meaning. You can write collocations, synonyms, antonyms, pronunciation, example sentences, pictures etc.

Review: The Key to Retention

It is much more effective to review your new words for 5-10 minutes per day than to leave it all until the day before your test.



Do it regularly

One week, two weeks and one month after you first learn a new word should be enough.



Make it fun

There are many word games that you can play on Memrise or Quizlet. You can also get creative and tell stories with your new words.



Use them

Try to use your new words in the same way you would in the speaking or writing tests. You can include them in your answers when appropriate to do so.

Make It Part of Your Routine

Consistency is the secret to vocabulary mastery. By dedicating just 5-10 minutes each day to reviewing your new words, you'll build a powerful habit that leads to lasting results. This daily practice is far more effective than cramming the day before your test.

Integrate vocabulary learning into your existing routines—review words during your morning coffee, on your commute, or before bed. Small, regular efforts compound into significant improvements over time.

Online Resources: It's All FREE!

You do not need to spend any money to improve your vocabulary. All of the resources you need are freely available on the internet.

Here is a list of favourite sites, but there are millions more that will help you. Simply use Google to find something that interests you.

News and Current Affairs

BBC News

All of the common IELTS topics are covered on a daily basis. Listen or read.

The Guardian

They have a great selection of news articles and podcasts.

Podcasts and Audio Content

Stitcher

This app gives you access to hundreds of thousands of podcasts.

YouTube

An endless supply of videos.

Ted Talks

Fun and interesting talks by some of the world's leading thinkers.

Interactive Learning Tools

Quizlet

Simple tools for learning anything.

Memrise

Nice app for recording and reviewing vocabulary. Makes reviewing vocab fun.

eBooks

Hundreds of thousands of books are now available to read online for free.

Remember: the resources are free, the method is proven, and the results are in your hands. Start today with just one article, one podcast, or one video about something you love. Your vocabulary journey begins with a single word.

📧 If you have any questions about IELTS or need help in any way, please feel free to get in touch with us via the email: chris@ieltsadvantage.com