



## Kev's English Podcast: Episode 13: How to speak naturally for IELTS

Hello, in this episode I talk about how to improve your speaking skills for IELTS, but also just for speaking in English generally. Have a listen and find out how you can do that..

My links..

If you want lessons, click here <https://www.italki.com/en/teacher/1078268>

If you want to see my videos, click here <https://www.youtube.com/@TheEnglishNative>

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Hello and welcome to Kev's English Podcast, Real English, every week.

Hello, hello, welcome once again to episode 13, I think, of Kev's English Podcast, a podcast by Kev in English, hence the title. Now, it's been a week or so, I just haven't had the time, and where I live, outside my office, we've had lots of construction work.

They've been redoing the roads, so, you know, we've had like, what do you call them, machines that dig the road up. People tearing up the concrete, putting new tarmac down, anyway, it's been very noisy, so I couldn't really make on. It's Sunday, er, Sunday, Saturday morning, it's 7.15am Saturday, this is one of the few times in the week when I can actually make a recording.

Nobody's up and about as yet, everybody's still in bed, I'm the only one up, or so it seems, so a bit of quiet to allow me to tell you what I want to tell you. Now, I was talking about this to my italki students this last week, I've had quite a few people taking the IELTS test, there's one girl taking it next Tuesday, I think, and other people are taking it soon, in a week or two, and they keep complaining about their speaking, they say, oh Kev, I took IELTS, I got 6, I got 5.5, and, you know, they need at least 6.5 or 7 or above, obviously, you know, more is better. However, they're encountering some problems, and when we've had a lesson, I've been speaking to them, asking them about their preparation, and I keep finding the same things over and over.

They keep getting bad advice, they go to all these so-called famous institutes in their country, in whichever country that might be, and they're telling them all this crap about what you should do and how you have to say this and you have to memorise answers and phrases. So, I thought I would talk about that and tell you what you don't really need. How to improve your speaking for IELTS, and, this is the key, to sound natural, sound as natural as possible, right.

One thing the examiners want, and they've said this in the Road to IELTS 3 British Council course, for example, they questioned the examiners and they said, what is it you want? They said, oh, we want clear, natural, simple communication, that's it. So, the best thing, number one, and I shouldn't have to say this, but practise as much as possible, right. If you're going to show the examiner you can clearly communicate in a natural way, you need experience.

Practise, practise. Lots of the people I've been speaking to in this past week, I don't know, it's about five or six, they don't speak in English. They just don't.

And they're telling me, oh, Kev, my spoken English is terrible. In some cases that was true, in other cases not, so it was a bit of a confidence issue. But they're just not practising.

They're maybe going to an English corner, if they can find one, or they might have one lesson with one teacher on italki. It's not enough. Practise, practise, practise.

Now, I've already spoken in a previous episode about how there's all these different language exchange websites, of course, the community page on italki and native teachers, etc. But there's lots of ways you can find people, both online and in person. So, I won't say any more, that's been covered in a previous episode.

But, number one, practise. Now, number two, understand what the examiner wants. Now, I've already spoken about IELTS myths and legends.

In a previous episode, people had all these strange misconceptions about what the examiner wants and how they should do this and how they should do that. I'm not going to repeat myself. You need to understand there's only four things.

Your fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, pronunciation. That's it. They're not interested in how you greet them or any other kind of nonsense.

There's not one correct answer. Anyway, I've spoken about this in a previous episode. So, if you wish, you can find that and check it out.

And, of course, this goes for the writing section. Understand the criteria precisely, what do the examiners want. It's like, one of the girls I spoke to said to me that she was giving too short answers.

I said, well, you know, why do you do that? She said, well, if I give short answers, I'm reducing the possibility of making a mistake. And I said, well, yeah, but simply saying yes, no, two, three, four, five, six word answers is not going to help you with your lexical resource and range and accuracy, is it? Anyway, number three, surround yourself in English. I've spoken about this again before, about creating an English environment, listening to music, podcasts, watching TV shows, getting exposure.

Actually, one of the best things that you can do, and this is a tip, do a 24-hour English warm-up the day before your test, right? So, in the 24 hours before your IELTS test, only engage in English. Speak, write, read, and listen. Don't do or watch or listen or say anything in Chinese, Russian, German, Italian, French, just English for 24 hours.

You'll feel a lot better when you do. Now, number four, use your vocab wisely. Now, again, I was speaking to some students on Italki this week, and several of them were using so-called advanced, and they actually used that word.

They said, oh, but you need to use advanced vocabulary. And I said, well, first, can you tell me what does that mean? And the second thing is they were using it incorrectly. So, they had a list of words that they're trying to squeeze in, hoping that this would somehow magically persuade the examiner of their English proficiency.

If you use it incorrectly, they'll spot your mistake straight away. So, don't learn long lists of words, will improve your score. It's not a memorisation test.

And also, that applies to writing down answers for part two and three and memorising them. Again, some of my students this week told me that's what they do. And when I was doing a mock speaking test, I could tell that's what they did and had been doing.

It's obvious. It doesn't sound natural. It's not natural communication.

It sounds like you're reading out of a script. As we all know, I said, what is that? That's not communication. Don't do it.

So, don't learn lists of words. You don't need fancy or complicated words. Just clearly communicate with them.

Now, another thing, right, is about tone. A couple of people did sound a bit rehearsed or, in one case, a bit robotic. Now, listen, I'm not saying I could do better in Chinese or Russian or German, but I'm not taking an exam.

You are. So, some of them were sounding very, well, unnatural. This is why you need to be practising regularly with natives so you can hear how they speak.

Every language has a rhythm. It's got intonation. It's got a flow.

And it's important to get that when you're speaking with the examiner. You might not think it's there like it or not, but if you want to play the IELTS game, you need to play by the IELTS rules. It's that simple.

So, you know, the speaking test is designed to mimic a natural conversation. So, conversational tone. Like I said to, was it one girl yesterday or two girls? I said, right, imagine you're speaking to your friend, right? And answer the question as if it's your friend you're speaking to, right? We were talking about something about shopping online.

It was from Cambridge, 18. And she said, I like shopping online. I bought a dress and she was... I said, is that how you would speak to a friend of yours? Saying you're out, you know, with a girl and she said, oh, listen, I just got this fantastic dress.

What was the last thing that you bought on online? You know, and I showed her the difference between natural, how you would speak to a friend informally and what she was doing. I'm not going to copy it now, but it was a major difference Yeah. So that's what you've got to do.

So practise with natives. Think you're speaking to a friend informally. Okay.

If you interact with native speakers, you can pick up on nuance and pronunciation, intonation, word usage, et cetera. Okay. Pronunciation.

There's a couple of different apps. I haven't spoken about those yet, but you can find them on the internet. Well, I don't know.

I mean, I recommend two, but there's probably a lot more. So there's some apps that you can use for pronunciation, you know, with some artificial intelligence feedback on your speech. So you can check out those.

You need to be able to talk about various topics, you know, just read the news, current affairs, cultural events, common IELTS themes. So you've got something that you can say, you know, you don't need to do too much research because, you know, the IELTS, the topics and questions are designed to be those which most people could speak about. There's no controversial topics.

There's no particularly difficult ones. It's that which any person could reasonably be expected to speak about. So, you know, try to avoid lengthy pauses, not too many ums and ahs.

There's lots of fillers, you know, like, well, you know, I mean, anyway, actually there's quite a few that you can use, so that's something else. Now, listen to the examiner very carefully. Now, again, this happened a couple of times this past week with some of my my students.

I have to say my first-time students, those who I've had for at least one session or more don't do this anymore, but I noticed one or two of them were misunderstanding the question. They weren't paying attention. They were so focused on grammar, oh, I've got to do this, I've got to do that, that they didn't understand or they misinterpreted what the question was and what the examiner was trying to get them to show them.

Now, if you don't understand, you can ask them. Again, this is one of the myths which I mentioned before. If you're not clear about anything, ask them.

It's not a crime, you won't be losing marks. If you did, oh, I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch that question, could you repeat it? I'm sorry, I don't understand, what does that word mean? You can say that, that's perfectly fine. So, if necessary, ask them to repeat or clarify to make sure you address the topic appropriately.

That's better than not understanding it and going off at a tangent. You will definitely lose marks if you do so. Okay, what else, what else? Now, nervousness, anxiety.

I understand some people are a bit, you know, they have performance issues, their language skills are excellent, but they have nervousness, anxiety. So, I understand. Now, there's some relaxation techniques, there's some deep breathing things that you can do, you can try those, I'm not going to say too much more.

I think if you're properly prepared and you've done lots of speaking with different people and natives, it shouldn't be that much of a challenge, of a strain, of a test when you speak to the examiner. So, once again, practise makes perfect. You need mock tests on the timed conditions, you need proper teachers who understand how it works.

And so, again, a couple more things, you know, which I must re-emphasise. Most important, no circumstances use memorised answers. Guaranteed low score.

Guaranteed. Don't do it. And also, don't, you know, don't focus on grammar to the exclusion of natural speech.

You know, people keep on thinking, oh, I must use this tense, I must use that tense. Don't do it, just be natural, use the appropriate tense for the question. So, what does all this mean? Well, speaking naturally, whether in the IELTS or just, you know, speaking English in general, it's a skill that can be developed through consistent practise and preparation.

Use of intonation, a conversational tone, like I'm doing now, you know, a nice tone, rhythm, tone, practise. This is how you can achieve that. So, if you keep the tips which I've just expressed in mind, I'm not going to do a recap, you can rewind and listen to this episode again, but there's things you can do.

So, the number one thing is, right, be natural. They want you to be as natural and native-like, whether you like it or not, they want you to be as natural and native-like as possible. And that's practise and understanding what that means.

So, I hope these tips will help you. And of course, if you need anything else, links wherever you see this to contact me on italki and I'll help you out if required. Okay, so I hope that helps.

Yes, so that will do for today, episode 13. I'll see you probably next week. I'm thinking of doing a regular routine or schedule.

You know, the best time for me now is to record on Saturday morning and Sunday morning, because when everybody else is in bed, nobody's crashing in and out, the door's not going bang, bang, bang. There's no noise out in the street. So, you can probably expect a new episode every Saturday or Sunday.

Anyway, hope that helps. I'll see you next time.