



Kev's English Podcast: Episode 8: What books do I need for IELTS?

Hello, time for another episode. In this one I talk about what books you need for IELTS...and give some recommendations. Take a listen....

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>

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

Hello, hello, welcome to Kev's English Podcast, episode number eight. So in this episode I want to address something that I'm asked quite often about, the IELTS test.

People keep on asking me for book recommendations. Do I need books for IELTS? And yes, yes you do, although maybe not for the reasons that you think. As I say, in my lessons on Italki and in my interaction with my students, they keep on asking me, Kev, which IELTS book is going to help me get a seven, what's the best book for vocab, what's the best book for grammar, etc.

And my response is, well, it's none of them, because books are created by publishing companies and houses for one reason, to sell as many books as possible. So that means that they are treating you all, all you learners, as one mass, one big group instead of individuals. They assume that you're all making the same mistakes and one book can fix those mistakes, but they can't.

This is why I prefer giving lessons to individuals, I don't do group classes, because, right, books and course books are good for for groups, because you have to convey certain information and people may be at a current level or ability, but for individuals you need an individual training programme or schedule. So are books useless? Well, no, they are not. In terms of IELTS, they can provide a great overview of what you need to do and they'll help you get to grips with the format and structure of the exam.

But that's all. If you're looking for some kind of magic book that the mere possession or ownership of which will get you a seven or above, then you will be disappointed. There's no such magic book

available, although if I could be the author of such a book I would make a lot of money.

So if you really want to improve for the IELTS test, or indeed in anything, first you must identify what your individual mistakes are and get specific advice about what you need to do to improve. I've had a few people in the last week saying I've got a week, a month, two weeks left before my exam, what should I do? To which I have to answer, well, it depends what you've previously done. How do I know what you need to do? I say, can you give me some last minute advice? And no, I can't.

Without knowing what you've done before, what your weak points were, if you've overcome them, there's no advice I can possibly give you. What you, well you, they, what they should have done is to get someone to assess them and work out what their weak points were and develop a study plan or strategy, that's what. So when people ask me this, can you give me any last minute hints or tips? The answer is no, I cannot.

Now, that being said, I'm not suggesting that you don't have any use or need for books, there's some I recommend. For example, the Cambridge Official Guide, that comes with a handy DVD for the speaking session. You can use that as a workbook, do a few pages a day.

Pauline Cullen's Key to IELTS books, she's one of the authors of a test so she can bank on her advice. Some of the IELTS vocab books, there's that Rawdon Wyatt book, for instance. Check your vocab for IELTS, that's obviously good.

And of course, the Cambridge Previous Papers books, 18 volumes. There should be volume 19 coming out in July, I think. So I would agree, you know, that no student should enter the IELTS exam without having first done some practise tests from one or more of these books.

I wouldn't overdo it, though, like some of my students did before I told them to stop. There's no need for constant testing. All that a test does, if you think about it, is to test what you already know.

It can't really teach you anything new or expand your knowledge of grammar or vocabulary, you know. So taking practise tests to find out what your level might be and identify what question types or areas you might have to work on is one thing. And taking practise tests is more to familiarise yourself with how the exam works, how it looks, what's the structure, different question types, and to get some practise under timed conditions.

But that's all. So there's no need to overdo constantly, like some of my previous students until I told them that's what they used to do. So what I would do, I take a listening and reading test at first and see what scores you would get.

And if there are any problems or any particular question types, work on those. You know, there are strategies for all the different question types in both listening and reading. Maybe I'll speak about those at a later date.

And as for writing, you need someone who knows what they're doing to take a look at your task 1 and 2 and tell you what they think. You may need to work on grammar or vocabulary, maybe usually both, and to understand how the criteria apply to your written work. The same as for speaking.

I get many students on italki who speak to themselves as if they've no one to speak to, which is not very productive, I have to say. You can't really give feedback to yourself. So as you see, you know, books alone won't get you particularly far towards your IELTS goals.

They can help, but they're not some magic panacea for your IELTS problems, really. Also, you have to remember that IELTS is a test of your English knowledge and ability, so you need to develop your general English skills outside of IELTS. In this regard, books are very important, or more precisely, reading in general as widely as possible.

In fact, I mean, if you look at the teacher's guides for any of these exams, it says encourage your students to read as widely as possible. Because it's one of the best ways to improve your vocabulary and to identify new grammar and sentence construction. One more thing, you'll need to create an ideas bank for yourself.

Let me briefly explain. So we know what the topics are for writing and to some extent of speaking. There's maybe 20 or so themes such as environment, education, health, crime, etc.

You can find the list online in a matter of seconds. So once you've identified the themes, you need to systematically research or read about the topics one by one. You can Google IELTS topic crime, for example, and you get many pages to look at.

I would just look at maybe the first three or four, maybe five. You can find some new language, some ideas, very important, sample essays, etc. You can copy these, you can store them, and you can use them in your preparation.

So while there are some websites with this kind of information, and also some books, the one I mentioned before, the Check Your Vocab for IELTS book. Reading actively and searching for yourself will give you a big boost when test time comes, especially for the ideas bank. What lots of people say to me is that they took the exam and they had no clear ideas about the question or topic, whether it be environment, education, transport, society, technology, family, or whatever.

Writing and speaking for the IELTS test are about clear communication. So if you have no ideas, you've nothing to communicate in your writing nor in your speaking. So in conclusion then, books are useful for sure, but I wouldn't over rely on them, you know.

There's no magic book that's going to guarantee you a high score. Certainly make them a part of your strategy for learning and good luck with your exam. Okay, I hope that helps.

See you next time on Kev's English Podcast. Bye for now.