Basic IELTS

Speaking

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- Consolidating Your English Ability
- Improving Your English Speaking Skill
- Providing General Knowledge
- Developing Your Test-Taking Skill

NHÀ XUẤT BẢN TỔNG HỢP
THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

NTV
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FOREWORD

You have certainly practised a great deal to prepare for your actual exam. You have also been exposed to a variety of materials, and have familiarised yourself with the format of the IELTS test. This book, therefore, does not aim at loading you with more practice materials on IELTS, but it will sum up the main points so as to enable you to work out an effective plan to finally achieve your desired band score in the actual test you are taking.

I. Six features of the IELTS test

1. Communicative Testing

The first feature of the IELTS test is communicative testing. The purpose of this test is, indeed, designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is the language of communication. It aims at testing candidates' language use, not language knowledge.

Compare the items in the table below:

Focus of communicative testing	Focus of non-communicative testing
• Use of verbal and non-verbal communication • Understanding meanings of lexical items in contexts • Applying understanding into real-life tasks such as role-play in speaking, completing a table in reading • Integrating receptive with productive skills	• Knowledge of vocabulary and grammar • Understanding literal meanings of lexical items • Testing individual skills • Focussing only on receptive skills

2. The Third Generation Testing

As far as testing is concerned, the format of tests has resulted from the way language is taught and learnt. In reality, English language testing has so far gone through three stages: the first stage lasted from the beginning of the 20th century to prior World War II when the tests of this period focussed mainly on translating from and into the target language. Then, the second stage started from post World War II and continues up to the present time. The general trend of testing in this period concentrated on objective tests (typically the TOEFL test which is primarily popular in the US). Next came the third stage with the IELTS test which was introduced in 1989 (mainly popular in the UK and Australia) and was, in fact, the fruit of the Communicative Language Teaching that came into existence in the 1970s. Nowadays,

3. Task-based Testing

In the IELTS test, candidates are required to perform tasks which are similar to those in "real life". Each task is given with clear and specific "directions" by examiners.

4. Questions in Group

Communicative testing results in a variety of question types. Discrete-point tests are not given in the IELTS test, but questions in various forms aiming at checking global and detailed understanding, summary/chart/table completion, are frequently tested.

Task-based testing and questions in group are combined to form a series of communicative activities which require candidates to decide appropriate strategies and to use the four skills in order to do the test well.

5. A Variety of Question Types

The IELTS test consists of a variety of question types, which is the most noticeable compared with the question types in such tests as TOEFL, GRE, or TOEIC. For example, multiple-choice questions are suitable for testing detailed comprehension whereas matching exercises aim at testing vocabulary or the main ideas of a listening or reading passage; the aim of gap-filling tasks is to check candidates' ability of organising the information in a systematic way, etc. With such tasks, candidates need to thoroughly understand what is required of them by carefully reading "directions" given.

Types of tasks in the IELTS test:

Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
1. Short-Answer Questions 2. Gap-Filling Questions 3. Multiple-Choice Questions 4. Classification Questions 5. True/False/Not Given Questions 6. Sentence-Completion Questions 7. Matching Questions 8. Diagram/Table/Flow Chart-Completion Questions	1. Multiple choice 2. Gap filling: Form/ Note/Summary/Table/ Sentence 3. Matching words/ phrases/sentences/ with pictures 4. Short answers 5. True/False	1. Letters (General Training Module) 2. Chart/Graph/ Table/Diagram descriptions (Academic Module) 3. Essays: - Opinion - Cause and effect	1. Giving information 2. Stating opinion 3. Explaining/ Suggesting 4. Describing 5. Comparing/ Contrasting 6. Synthesising/ Analysing 7. Likes/Dislikes

6. Authentic Materials

All the materials used in the IELTS test are authentic.

Both Academic and General Training modules try to reflect real-life situations to test whether a candidate would survive in English-speaking social and academic environments. For example, Section 2 of the Speaking test asks candidates to talk, after 1 minute's preparation, for 1 to 2 minutes on a given general topic. This would test General Training candidates to see if they could give a "work-related presentation" to fellow work colleagues and would test Academic candidates if they could give a "university style presentation" to fellow students. It tests whether candidates have the English language capability to perform these tasks under some kind of pressure.

The IELTS test has two forms: the Academic Module and the General Training Module. The module that you take depends on the purpose that you are taking it for. Generally speaking, the Academic Module is for those who are trying to gain entry into undergraduate or postgraduate education courses or for professional purposes. The General Training Module is for those who wish to join some kinds of vocational training courses, secondary schools or for immigration purposes.

These tables help you to understand more clearly about the format and timing of the two IELTS modules:

	Academic	General Training
Listening	4 sections; 40 questions 30 minutes	4 sections; 40 questions 30 minutes
Reading	3 sections; 40 questions 3 long texts 1 hour	3 sections; 40 questions 3 long texts 1 hour
Writing	2 tasks 1 hour	2 tasks 1 hour
Speaking	3 sections 11 – 14 minutes	3 sections 11 – 14 minutes

	Academic	General Training
Listening	Social English occurs in Section 1 and Section 2 of the Listening test whereas academic English is used in Sections 3 and 4. The Listening test is the same for both the Academic and General Training modules. Candidates will listen to a recording and answer a series of questions. The recording will be played ONCE only. The Listening test is in four sections with 10 questions in each (i.e. a total of 40 questions) and will last for 30 minutes with an extra 10 minutes at the end for candidates to	

Reading	The Reading test is a 1-hour test in 3 sections with 40 questions based on 1 reading text per section (i.e. 3 reading texts). The length of the test will be between 2,000 and 2,750 words. Texts are taken from magazines, journals, books and newspapers. Texts are for an undergraduate or postgraduate readership but assume NO specialist knowledge of the subject. All reading passage topics will be of general academic interest. At least one text will contain a logical argument. One text may include a diagram, graph or illustration. If there are any words or terms of a specialist technical nature, which candidates would not be expected to know, a short glossary will be provided.	The Reading test is a 1-hour test in 3 sections with 40 questions based on 1 reading text per section. The length of the test will be between 2,000 and 2,750 words. In this module, texts are taken from notices, advertisements, official documents, booklets, newspapers, instruction manuals, leaflets, timetables, books and magazines. The first section is concerned with social survival in an English-speaking country. The second section is concerned with survival in an education, training or welfare context. The third section tests candidates' abilities with a longer, more complex text.
Writing	The Writing test is of 1-hour duration. Candidates are required to do 2 tasks. Task 1 asks candidates to describe factual information presented in pictorial form(s). The pictorial form(s) could be a line graph, a bar chart, a pie chart, a table or a picture describing a process. There could be a combination of these input forms. Candidates must write a minimum of 150 words. Task 2 asks candidates to write an essay on a general academic topic. Candidates must write a minimum of 250 words.	The Writing test is of 1-hour duration. Candidates are required to do 2 tasks. Task 1 requires candidates to write a letter in response to a given situation. Candidates must write a minimum of 150 words. Task 2 asks candidates to write an essay on a general topic. Candidates must write a minimum of 250 words.
Speaking	The Speaking test is the same for both the Academic and General Training modules. The test is conducted with 1 examiner and 1 candidate. The Speaking test is recorded and divided into 3 sections. Section 1 begins with some general introductory questions. This is followed by some questions on personal information similar to the type of questions one would ask when meeting someone for the first time. Finally, the examiner will ask a series of questions on topics of general interest. (4 – 5 minutes) Section 2 is a monologue by the candidate. The examiner will give the candidate a card with a subject and a few guiding questions on it. The candidate must talk for 1 to 2 minutes on this subject excluding an optional 1 minute's preparation for his talk. After this talk, the examiner will ask 1 or 2 brief questions in order to finish off the section. (3 – 4 minutes) Section 3 is a discussion. The examiner will ask some more questions generally related to the subject spoken about in Section 2. These questions will be more demanding and require some	

II. What you should do in the last stage of your preparation for the IELTS test

In this critical period, you have supposedly accumulated adequate knowledge of vocabulary items and grammar points. Also, your skills of English have considerably improved after a long time of practice. In addition, you have grasped the key features of the IELTS test, your job now is to train your test-doing strategies and enhance your communicative competence. You should know how to allocate the time allowed, how to use appropriate strategies and exploit your strengths to the utmost when taking the test to achieve your desired band score.

A series of **15 DAYS' PRACTICE FOR IELTS** guidebooks designed by IELTS gurus who have written and taught IELTS courses since this kind of test came into being are regarded as indispensable materials on your path to success.

In this series, the speaking and writing materials are edited by Sheila Crowe, an Irish expert to whom we would like to show our appreciation and thanks. Besides, an English examiner named Donald Crawford deserves our gratitude for some of his sample writings with which he has provided us. Lastly, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to specialists and colleagues whose great contributions certainly bring about the birth of these rewarding books.

Wang Hong Xia

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Day 1 The IELTS Speaking Test

I. An Overview

1 The IELTS Speaking Format

The IELTS Speaking test is the same for both the Academic and General Training modules. It is different from the other parts of the IELTS test because it is a one-to-one interaction between a candidate and an examiner. The three parts of the test give the candidate the opportunity to use a wide range of speaking skills. The Speaking test is recorded.

The following table is the format of the IELTS Speaking test:

Task	Time	Task description
Part 1 – Introduction and Interview	4 – 5 minutes	The examiner introduces himself / herself and confirms the candidate's identity by asking questions about the candidate. Next, the examiner asks the candidate about familiar topic frames.
Part 2 – Individual Long Turn	3 – 4 minutes	The examiner asks the candidate to speak for 1 – 2 minutes on a particular topic. Information is given on a card and the candidate has 1 minute to prepare before he / she starts. The examiner asks one or two questions after the candidate's presentation.
Part 3 – Two-way Discussion	4 – 5 minutes	The examiner invites the candidate to participate in a discussion of a more abstract topic related to the topic on the card in Part 2.

The IELTS Speaking test has been designed to test your ability to engage in a conversation and to test how well you can communicate your thoughts and opinions.

The IELTS Speaking test is the shortest of the components of the IELTS test – only 11 to 14 minutes. In this short time, you have to convince the examiner who will be speaking with you of your level of English.

As you have seen in the table above, the Speaking test is divided into 3 parts:

Part 1 involves general introduction. Here, the examiner checks that he or she has the right person by confirming the candidate's name, origin, and identification. This part is also designed to help the candidate relax and it takes only a few seconds. Then, the examiner

asks the candidate about familiar topics in life such as his/her country, home town, family, studies/jobs, free-time activities, future plans, etc. This part takes about 4 or 5 minutes.

Part 2 is the individual long turn talk. It provides an opportunity for the candidate to deliver a long, uninterrupted response. The examiner will give the candidate a cue card with a subject such as education, family, work, interests, and lifestyle and some cues or a few guiding questions on the card. These questions are short and the structure of the questions is simple. The candidate must talk for 1 to 2 minutes on this subject. He or she is expected to demonstrate an ability to construct a long sample of English. The examiner will assess the candidate's fluency, coherence, range of structures, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

The candidate has an optional 1 minute in order to prepare for his/her talk and is provided with some paper and a pencil in order to make some brief notes. After the candidate's talk, the examiner will ask 1 or 2 brief questions in order to finish off this part which takes about 3 – 4 minutes.

Part 3 is the most complex testing part. Here, the examiner will prompt and lead the candidate to a series of questions on the topic spoken about in Part 2. For example, in Part 2, you may have to describe *a favourite teacher* and in Part 3, you may have to discuss *education* in your country. These questions will be more demanding and require some critical analysis on the part of the candidate. The examiner is still in control, but must allow the candidate to produce longer utterances or discuss the questions. You will be scored on how effectively you can develop the abstract ideas on the IELTS test. These questions and discussions may take 4 or 5 minutes.

Note that in Part 1 of the Speaking test, questions cannot be changed or reworded. In Part 3, there is more flexibility. If the candidate does not understand a word in the question, or the question itself, it is possible for the candidate to ask for repetition or clarification.

Overall, try to stick to the topic in this specific part of the IELTS test. This is the section where the examiner will really try to get an understanding of your knowledge. Be sure to use proper grammar and accents when appropriate.

② Examiners and the Test Room

• The examiner

The examiner interviewing you during the IELTS test is trained to assess your spoken English against IELTS criteria. Examiners can come from any country where English is spoken as a native language. They are all professional teachers with advanced degrees. They have received specific IELTS training to make sure they judge you fairly and honestly.

• The test date

The IELTS Speaking test might not even be held on the same day as the other parts of the test. This is because there will usually be a large number of candidates sitting the test, and there is not enough time for everyone to have their individual speaking test on the same day. Whether or not your IELTS Speaking test will be held on the same day will depend on when and where you are sitting your IELTS test. You can find out more information about the dates when you book your test with the IELTS test centre. You will be informed of the time and place of your speaking test by the test centre at least 72 hours prior to the test date.

• The test room

You are not allowed to take anything into the test room – everything you need will be provided – EXCEPT that you MUST remember to take your identification. It has to be the same means of identification with which you registered. In reality, some candidates have been refused admission to the test room because they registered with their national ID card but did not have it with them on the test day!

The IELTS Speaking test is, in fact, an interview in which each candidate is interviewed individually. In the test room, on the examiner's desk are test materials, score-recorded sheets of paper, pens, an audio cassette or a digital recorder and tapes or CDs. The IELTS speaking interview will be recorded. Recording the interview has a number of benefits. This is done so that, if necessary, the Speaking test can be remarked. If the bands for a candidate's Writing and Speaking tests, for instance, are very different, then the candidate's Speaking test is re-checked. If the oral interview was not recorded, this could not be done. This does not happen very often.

Sample recordings are also sent to the IELTS administration to be monitored to make sure that examiners are doing a good job and assigning the correct bands. Therefore, forget that the recorder is there and get on with answering the questions.

❸ Marking Criteria

When marking the Speaking category, examiners use a table of detailed performance descriptors which describe spoken performance at each of the 9 IELTS bands. Examiners award a band score for each of the following four criterion areas:

1. Fluency and Coherence
2. Lexical Resource
3. Grammatical Range and Accuracy
4. Pronunciation

Fluency refers to speaking continuously without stopping, and coherence means organising speech in a logical way (i.e. Does your speech flow? Can you be easily understood?).

Lexical Resource refers to using words which are varied and appropriate for the subject (i.e. Do you use a reasonably wide range of vocabulary in your speech?).

Grammatical Range and Accuracy refer to the use of correct grammar and variation of grammatical usage (i.e. Do you use a wide range of sentence structures and is your English grammar accurate when you speak?).

Pronunciation refers to speaking in a manner which is easily understood (i.e. Do you use English sound, stress and intonation patterns, etc. correctly?).

These four criteria are weighed equally. The examiner gives you a whole-number sub-score for each of these and then calculates the average of the four.

❹ Band Score

The IELTS Speaking test is marked on a scale of 1 – 9. Most universities require a score of 6.0 – 6.5 for entrance; however, this varies according to country and university.

You do not need to be an absolutely fluent speaker of English to get a reasonable IELTS Speaking score. The examiner will be looking for your ability to use a range of vocabulary and grammar in a way that is clear and understandable. Both whole number and half band scores, such as 6.5, are given for the Speaking test. If the average score is not a whole number or a half number, it is rounded to the nearest whole number or half number.

II. How to Prepare for the IELTS Speaking Test

Many people preparing for the IELTS Speaking test worry how they can finish what they want to say in the time available. The best way to get the timing right is to practise making short talks on various topics on your own.

❶ Prepare yourself

- **Look your best**

Although people are not supposed to 'judge the book by its cover', some people unconsciously tend to do that. If you do not look credible enough, they may not even start listening to what you have to say. You do not need to wear gowns or tuxedos, but simply wear clothes fit for the occasion. Your clothes should be neat and free of wrinkles, not too loud that people would rather stare at it than you. You should be pleasant-looking, not only paying attention to your clothes but your faces and gestures as well.

- **Be humble**

You should admit your mistakes during your talk and apologise for those mistakes. There are times you may forget a certain term. Instead of pausing for a long time or using a word you are not sure of, it is better to ask your examiner. Examiners would appreciate your

humility and even relate to you more because they know you are just like them – a human capable of making mistakes and forgetting things.

- Be self-confident

It is understandable that you will be under considerable tension created by the examination situation. Almost everyone is nervous when they speak in public or in testing situations. High levels of anxiety can, in fact, affect a candidate's performance. However, much of this anxiety can be overcome by good preparation, familiarity with test details and a positive attitude.

You should believe in what you are saying. If you do not sound convinced by what you say, you cannot expect anyone to believe it. It is important that you are relaxed when taking this test. Nevertheless, take a deep breath, and try to look self-assured. The examiner is trying to assess your language communication capabilities. He/She will not be able to assess you unless you speak up.

As this is a face-to-face interview, you should also show positive body language and a confident posture.

❷ Relax and speak as confidently as you can

Candidates who are not able to participate fully in the conversation may not achieve their potential band score. This may be because they have not been able to demonstrate the level of language they are capable of producing.

Maintain eye contact with the assessor. Although theoretically you could speak great English with your head down, the fact is you may not come across as confident. Although there is no mark for confidence, you need to present yourself in as positive ways as possible.

❸ Enhance your English communication skills

Expose yourself to everyday topics as often discussed in newspapers or on radio and TV programmes. Make it your habit to read newspaper and magazine articles, particularly those that discuss issues and contain arguments and opinions. Also, listen to radio discussions and watch TV interview programmes on current affairs. Not only does this give you some excellent listening practice, but it will build your background knowledge for the issues that may come up in both the Speaking and Writing tests. Choose an issue and record all the vocabulary you will need to discuss that issue – note words raised in the news articles or programmes on TV, radio, newspapers. Try to do one of these every day. When you consider an issue, decide what would be your position on the issue, especially the steps you will need to take to reach your desired position and how you would overcome any possible problems in discussing it. Be prepared to use descriptive and comparative language. Practise using conditional sentences to discuss, for instance, hypothetical issues from a broad or world view:

"If the world economy becomes more global, all nations will lose their cultural independence." or *"If the leaders of the world were to spend more money on the poor, many of the problems of global conflict would be resolved."*

i) Get a friend to ask you the questions and practise giving long, full answers. Do this again and again. It does not matter if you do the same question frequently, as you will give better and better answers with more and more information. The more often you practise this, the better you will get.

ii) If you do not have a friend who can do this, then you can do it by yourself. You just look at your list and imagine that someone has asked you the question. Then, off you go. You can do this at home: you can talk to the cat, the mirror, or do it on the way driving to work. It may feel a bit strange at first (talking by yourself), but it works and you will improve. You do not have to do either method i or ii, you can mix both. It all helps.

❹ Be ready to use a good range of tenses and a variety of grammar but avoid written language

For instance, speculating on some issues in the future, you may be asked questions like:

Examiner: *What future role do you see for music in society?*
Candidate: *Well, I'd (or I've) always hoped that all the peoples of the world could benefit by sharing their common experience of music. In the past, there were many examples of musicians joining forces to raise awareness of global issues that resulted from famine or human rights abuses.*
Or: *If different cultures could see the common features of music in other countries, they may be less fearful of each other and understand one another's cultures better.*

When giving answers, you should not try in vain to express ideas or concepts by using a lot of written language, for instance: in addition, furthermore, moreover, inform, etc., which make you sound unnatural.

III. Commonly-Seen Problems in the IELTS Speaking Test

❶ Giving short answers

If you just give answers with only Yes or No, which are too short, you cannot convince the examiner of your ability of English. Here, you should demonstrate your skills in providing extended answers rather than just an outright Yes/No or other similar one-word answers.

Answer in complete sentences! Develop your answers as much as possible. Speak more than the examiner. Keep talking until the examiner interrupts you or goes to the next question. If you need time to think, say something like *That's an interesting question* or just repeat the question in a form like *You'd like me to tell you about (topic).*

❷ Using broad generalisations

Some candidates give too many broad generalisations when giving answers. In addition, some others frequently use the expression *such as* when listing, which both takes time and expresses nonsense. Avoid trying to create an impression on the examiner with big words that you may use incorrectly. Instead, use simple words to discuss complex ideas; try to present your viewpoint and then explain it; or you can give some specific examples, arguments or causes and effects. In brief, you should make use of the time to show your oral ability of English. Speak with simplicity and sincerity.

Use examples from your own life. These you can speak about more easily than stories you have made up or read somewhere else. Try to relax and enjoy the experience of telling the interviewer as much interesting information about yourself as you can.

❸ Mentioning complex subjects

When giving answers, you should not try in vain to express ideas or concepts that you do not really understand. The test is designed to give you an ample chance to answer a variety of questions. It does not matter if all the things that you say are not true. In brief, focus on what you know rather than on what you do not know while you are doing the test.

❹ Getting stuck on vocabulary

If you get stuck on vocabulary, try to describe what you mean by using a phrase or a sentence to express yourself. If you cannot find out the right word at the right time, say something like *Oh, the word I'm looking for has slipped my mind*. If you get utterly lost, say *I'm afraid I've talked myself into a corner. Let me start over* or better *I don't think I should continue with this. Let me say it in a different way* and start answering the question in another way. Sometimes, you can use some fillers like *Well, Mm, Let me see, Give me one moment*, etc.

❺ Giving rote answers

Remember that this is not a test of knowledge and there is no single answer. Do not memorise set responses! If you do, it will sound false and come across as if you are making a speech! You need to sound natural all through the test.

Therefore, do not learn chunks of answers. The examiner is trained to spot this and will change the questions. Try to give your opinion by developing your answers as much as possible and speak more than the examiner.

❻ Using incorrect tenses or personal pronouns

Incorrect tenses or confusing personal pronouns are often used by candidates in the

Speaking test. You might be asked to describe past situations; you, therefore, have to make sure you are using the right past forms of verbs.

These mistakes can be overcome by practising at home, recording your answers onto a recorder and listening again to self-correct them. It is important to speak English as much and as often as you can while preparing for the IELTS test.

❼ Paying too much attention to grammar and pronunciation

Many non-native speakers about to attend an IELTS interview are understandably worried about making mistakes in their grammar and pronunciation; they, thus, cannot communicate effectively. The examiner will expect some mistakes – after all, English is a foreign language for you and people make mistakes in speaking foreign languages. Therefore, do not worry about occasional mistakes. Get on with the talking and concentrate on your communication.

❽ Showing off knowledge

As with the Writing test, do not show off. Some candidates consider the interview as a way of showing the assessor what they know. Remember that this is not a test of knowledge. In the Speaking test, IELTS candidates are assessed on their performance in an interview; that is, you will be assessed on your ability to communicate and to take initiative in a conversation. Hence, concentrate on what you are saying rather than trying to show off your knowledge: focus on the common ideas and themes of what you are saying to the examiner.

IV. Useful Tips for the IELTS Speaking Test

There are a number of tips you can apply to have a better performance in the IELTS Speaking test.

❶ Be polite

When you are in the test, smile and look the examiner in the eye. You can make use of the beginning and the end of your Speaking test to create a good impression on the examiner by building in an appropriate short introduction and conclusion.

(at the beginning of the interview)

Good morning/afternoon.

I'm very glad to meet you. / It's my pleasure to meet you.

You must be very tired after a long day's work.

The final section of the assessment will naturally follow on from Part 3. The interviewer will let you know that the interview has come to an end, wish you good luck, and say goodbye.

You can prepare yourself for this phase by becoming familiar with common expressions of leave-taking, noting them and practising responses to them.

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(*at the end of the interview*)

Thank you for your time. Goodbye.

Thank you very much for your help.

I really enjoyed talking with you.

Goodbye. It's been nice talking to you. Bye.

② Expand on topics

All the questions will be open questions rather than closed questions. An open question asks the candidate to give an extended answer, so make use of this opportunity to show how good your English is.

You have to talk. Without your talking input, the examiner cannot grade you very well. Try to give as full an answer as you can so that you show the examiner that you are comfortable at talking at length and can communicate well. Use the transition signals to make your points stand out. Examples:

There are three main reasons for my choosing this major. **For one thing**, it is very interesting, offering me varieties in my life. **For another**, it can help me find a better job with better pay. **Finally**, it is something my mother wished to do but didn't, so she wanted me to fulfil her dream.

Well, it's like this: first(ly), you insert your card; second(ly), enter your PIN number; next, enter the amount you want to take out; **then**, take your cash; **finally**, take your card and the receipt.

First of all, introduce the guests to them; **then**, exchange ideas with them about these issues.

Apart from these/Besides, ask for their suggestions by giving them some questionnaires.

Well, the point I'm trying to make is that the government has a great role to play in controlling air pollution.

On the one hand, there is a great need to produce private cars. **On the other hand**, the public has realised the serious problems brought about by pollution from heavy traffic.

While there is a need for developing private cars, the local government still prefers to invest more on public transport.

Company A is different from Company B in that the former is a shareholding company.

③ Make generalisations

In order to avoid too many broad generalisations when giving answers, these specific examples can help you:

I'm inclined to be permissive with my little son.

I tend to be punctual for any appointment.

In most cases, they can finish their tasks without much help from the teachers.

Generally speaking, he is very helpful, giving us unfailing support and help.

By and large, we shouldn't give up what we have been attempting to do.

On the whole, this is an exciting tour though there have been some unhappy moments with the tour guide.

❹ Give opinions

Practice of introductory and transition words and phrases also aid preparation for the IELTS Speaking test. The following transitions enable you to present your personal view at ease:

Well, as far as I'm concerned, I'm of the opinion that the Internet has not shortened the technical gap between the developed and the developing countries.

I'd like to point out that there should be more strict censorship on the Internet.

From my point of view, e-commerce may be a major form of shopping in 20 years' time.

In my opinion, the government should invest more on infrastructure construction.

Personally/Frankly, I think young people should be given more opportunities.

I'd say that I've made a very important decision in my life.

Don't you agree that the present economic situation is quite promising?

As I see it, the investment is not very reasonable.

To be honest, I think your decision is not very sensible.

❺ Ask for repetition

There may be times in the interview when you may not understand what the examiner is saying because he or she may be speaking too softly or too quickly. At these times, do not be afraid to assert yourself. Ask the examiner to speak more loudly, more slowly, or to use other words. Also, do not hesitate to ask the examiner to repeat his or her words at any time. Examples:

I didn't quite follow what you were saying about "globalisation". Would you mind repeating it?

Sorry, I don't see what you mean. Can you say that again, please?

Sorry, I don't quite follow you.

I'm sorry, would you mind saying that again?

Sorry, I'm not quite sure what you mean.

I beg your pardon?

Sorry, I didn't quite catch that.

Sorry, I'm not exactly sure what you mean. Could you repeat the question, please?

⑥ Ask for clarification

You may have problems understanding a question. Perhaps the examiner may be using words or phrases you do not know. If there is something you do not understand, ask for clarification. This is all part of normal conversation and will show your ability to react appropriately in this sort of situation. What you must not do is just sit blankly and say nothing.

If you are looking for clarification, ask the interviewer to confirm what you think was asked:

I wonder if you could explain "economic globalisation" in greater detail.

Could I ask you a little more about "e-commerce" in greater detail?

I'm sorry, I don't quite understand what you mean by "status".

I'm afraid I'm not quite clear about what you mean. Would you please explain it?

I didn't quite follow what you were saying about "redundancy".

I'm sorry, but could you explain what you mean by "possession"?

Sorry, I don't know what you mean by "status".

Excuse me. I'm not quite clear about what you mean. Would you please put it another way?

Hopefully, these simple questions will get the interview back on track, and you will also have impressed the interviewer with your conversation skills.

⑦ Use hesitation devices

The most important thing which will help you in the Speaking test is to use English in your everyday conversations. Before the test, prepare the language you may use while thinking of ideas to express yourself. Below are useful fillers:

That's an interesting/a difficult question. I suppose/guess ...

Well, I think/guess ...

Let me see ...

How shall I put it? Let me put it in this way ...

As a matter of fact, ...

In fact, ...

You see/know, ...

Actually, ...

It's like this, you see.

8 Interrupt properly

When you want to stop someone interrupting, do not pause for too long, do not lower your voice, and (if you want) you can refuse to be interrupted. Conversely, you can use the following phrases to interrupt the examiner politely:

I'd like to add something here, if I may.

Can I interrupt (you) for a moment?

Sorry to interrupt, but ...

I'd just like to say that ...

By the way, ...

9 Make clarifications

When you want to clarify your thoughts and straighten out everything you are thinking, there are three different techniques you can try. Use the following expressions:

What I meant to say was there is a need for a return to morality.

What I meant by "revolution" is to carry out a reform in the system.

That's not quite what I meant. What I was trying to say was that we should carry out a reform in the state-run enterprises.

Let me put it another way.

Well, the point I'm trying to make is that the inflation is going up fast.

Sorry, let me explain further.

10 Express agreement

Telling people how you feel about something they have just said in English requires a bit of finesse. You have to be able to say what you want to say without offending the other person. In English, this often means finding round about ways of saying what you want to say and using a lot of polite expressions in your speech. Frankness is something that English speakers do not necessarily appreciate. Learn to express your agreement and disagreement by using various polite phrases.

Wait until it is your turn to speak, and use expressions of agreement, such as:

Yes, exactly.

Yes, I agree.

I agree entirely.

I think/suppose so.

That's what I want to say.

That's just what I was thinking.

I couldn't agree more.

That's a good point.

⓫ Express disagreement

Calmly express your disagreement. These are examples of how to remain polite in expressing your disagreement in English.

I'm afraid I cannot agree with you when you said ...

I agree with you to some extent, but I think ...

I'm not sure I quite agree ...

Well, you have a point here, but ...

Perhaps, don't you think that ...?

I see what you mean, but ...

⓬ Finish answering questions

I think that is all I can tell you about ...

I'm afraid that's all about ... as much as I know.

I think that's about it.

I can't think of anything else right now.

Would you like me to tell you more about ...?

Is that all you'd like to know?

⓭ Explain why you cannot answer a question

The IELTS assesses your language ability, not your knowledge. So, do not hesitate to talk wrong things. Using the following expressions appropriately can show your speaking ability.

Sorry, I have very little idea of ... You see ... (but I guess ...)

That's a rather difficult question, but (maybe) I can answer you by saying ...

I'm not quite sure how to answer that question, but (perhaps) ...

I'm afraid I cannot give you a satisfactory answer because ... But I will try my best to ...

I don't have much experience of ... because ... (but I guess ...)

Actually, to be frank, I really don't know very much about ...

Day 2 The IELTS Speaking Test – Part 1

The IELTS Speaking test consists of three parts involving one candidate (you), with one examiner and an audio recorder to "capture" your performance.

I. An Overview

❶ Introduction

This first section of the IELTS Speaking exam lasts about 4 – 5 minutes.

Part 1 is known as Introduction and Interview. Firstly, the examiner is supposed to step out of the test room to greet you. He/She then introduces himself/herself and checks your identity, and asks you some simple questions as greetings to help put you at ease.

When entering the test room, you should greet the examiner. This is also your chance to get off to a good start! So, remember to display your best ability. Below is a list of typical expressions of greeting:

Greetings	Responses
Good morning/afternoon!	Good morning/afternoon!
How are you today?	Fine, thank you/thanks.
How do you do?	How do you do?
How did you get on with your test this morning/yesterday?	Not too bad. (But I found the reading part is a little difficult for me.)
Hi, good to meet you.	Good to meet you, too.
Hi, how are you doing?	Not too bad. And you?
I haven't kept you waiting too long, have I?	No. It doesn't matter.
It's a beautiful/cold day, isn't it?	Yes, it certainly is./It's not very common for this season.
Come this way, please.	Thank you.

❷ Interview

Next, the examiner will ask some simple 'getting-to-know-you' questions which will help him/her find out a little about you. These will be general questions about your family, your studies, where you come from, or what your interests are, etc.

Questions	Responses
My name is ... Could you tell me your full name, please?	My name's Thanh Thu, but you can call me Thu.
Can you tell me where you are from?	I'm from Dong Nai Province.
And can I see your identification/ID card, please?	Sure. Here you are.
Thank you, that's fine.	
Now, in the first part I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself.	Please.

❸ Tips

If you simply did not hear something that was said due to the examiner's strange accent or low voice, politely say something like:

Would you please speak up? I cannot hear you clearly.

Excuse me, could you speak up, please?

Would you please slow down until I get familiar with your accent?

II. Question Types and How to Do Well

❶ Question types

In Part 1, the examiner will ask you some very general (very easy) questions about yourself, your home town, your studies, your likes and dislikes, your hobbies, etc. To ensure consistency, questions are taken from a scripted examiner frame.

All the questions will be open questions rather than closed questions. A closed question is one that can be answered by a single word or a couple of words; namely, those are questions beginning Have you ..., Do you ..., Is it ..., etc. which can be answered by Yes or No or couple-of-word answers. In fact, you will not get a question like:

Have you got any children? (This is a Yes/No question which a candidate could just answer Yes or No.)

An open question asks you to give an extended answer. Example:

Can you tell me about your family?

Here you have to give an explanation, and of course the examiner hears plenty of English which will help him or her evaluate you. So, make good use of the opportunity to show how good your English is.

❷ How to do well

The best way to take the Speaking test is to be relaxed and speak naturally.

From now, sit down with your dictionary and think of all the vocabulary you would need to completely describe all parts of your life, home, family and work or study. Then, with a piece of paper, write down every question you can think of about these ideas.

In the test room, do remember to:

a. Avoid giving short, uncommunicative replies.

Give a direct answer and then, expand your answers. Remember to give reasonably short answers, just enough to answer the question. For example:

- **Where do you come from?**
  - I come from Ho Chi Minh City, the biggest city in South Vietnam, you know ... a densely-populated city. But actually, I live about 30 kilometres out of the city – in a small town.

However, do not just ramble on in order to keep talking. You need to be coherent and able to take turns.

b. Offer examples to help you explain a statement.

An open question gives chance for the candidate to give an extended answer, so give more information by describing and explaining. For example:

- **How did you spend your Tet Holiday?**
  - Because my parents live in the countryside, so I went back there to stay with them. (poor answer)
  - I spent the Tet Holiday with my parents in Can Tho. As I work in Ho Chi Minh City and my parents live in Can Tho, I think it's the right thing to stay with them awaiting the arrival of the new year. We ... (good answer)

c. Use correct connectors and adverbs. Examples:

- I need to learn English because English is very important and English will help me to get an interesting job if I want to work in the tourist industry.
- I work in a bank as a bank teller. Working in a bank can be boring as many people do their banking by telephone or on the Internet now.
- Tennis is a wonderful game. But to play tennis well, you have to be very determined. And I enjoy playing tennis as well as watching tennis.

- At the moment, I live in a small apartment which is not very far away from my university. But I would like to have a larger place to live. Hopefully, one day I will.
- Even though take-away food is very popular in many countries, it is bad for our health and it is also expensive, so cooking at home is more sensible.
- It was impossible to know everyone at the school because my school was very large, and there were hundreds of children. I even did not know all the teachers.
- I love movies and I like watching TV, but I don't like live theatre and I don't like opera, either.
- I swim/run to keep fit because keeping fit is important. People who are not fit run the risk of getting ill. It is difficult to study unless you are well.

Day 3 Part 1 – Common Topics (1)

You can use the following sample questions to rehearse for this part of the oral interview. Make sure you can speak correctly, clearly, and with ease and confidence in response to each question. Remember to make your answer interesting by providing more than the most basic information.

I. Home Town

Concerning this topic, you may be asked to describe your home town with some details, such as where your home town is located, what is special about it, whether it is easy to travel around, what problems your home town faces, what languages are spoken, or what environmental problems there are; or you may also be asked to compare your home town with another city, etc.

Let's now talk about your home town.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- **Now, where are you from?/Where do you come from?**
- **Let's talk about your home town. What kind of place is it?**

  - My home town is Da Lat on the Lam Vien Plateau. It is well known for several names such as "the foggy city", "the city of flowers", "the city of romance", etc.
  - I'm from/I come from ... (a beautiful city in ... Province/a remote village in ...)

- **What part of the city do you live in?**

  - I live in the downtown area, in a flat overlooking a busy road. It is a bit noisy and crowded, but it is very convenient and there are more opportunities for jobs and education.
  - I live in the suburbs/outskirts of the city, but I work in the downtown area, so I have to commute to and from work every day.

- **What is it like living there?**

  - It is very convenient living there because there is a comprehensive transport system. We don't have to travel very far to do our shopping.

- It is a quiet place to live in.
- Living there is fascinating.

- How long have you lived there?/Have you always lived there?
- Have you ever lived in any other part of Vietnam?

- I lived there for 18 years. 10 years ago, I moved to Ha Noi for my education.
- I have been living there since I was born in 1993.

- Can you tell me the street you live in? How has the street changed in recent years?

- Well, I live in a tree-lined street called ... It used to be part of the field in the early 1980s, but now it is part of the downtown area. It is very famous for catering as there are varieties of restaurants offering different dishes to suit different tastes and wallets, local restaurants, seafood restaurants and you can even find some offering exotic food such as Indian food and Thai food. There are also many retail shops on the street.

- What is most interesting/best there?
- What kind of city is it? Is it an attractive/pleasant place for visitors?

- My home town is well known/famous for its pottery making (places of interest, delicious food, heavy industry, agricultural products, animal husbandry, wild animal breeding, etc.) throughout Vietnam/all over the world.
- It is rich in mineral deposits. /It has a long history of tea plantation dating back to the nineteenth century.
- The booming tourist industry is the best of my home town. Thousands of tourists from home and abroad come to visit it. You see, tourism has become one of the main resources of local economic revenue and contributes a lot to the city development.

- Are there any pleasant places to relax at the weekends?
- What kind of landscape surrounds your home town?
- What are the main tourist attractions in your home town?
- If I visited your city, what would you advise me to go and see?
- What can visitors do there?/What is there to see?

- Does your city have any historical importance? Are there any historic monuments there?
- Are there any interesting places to see?

○ Oh, yes. As Da Lat is located in a mountainous area with a pleasant climate, the views there are wonderful. If you climb up the mountains, you can overlook the whole city enjoying the spectacular scenery. At night, the city is brightly lit by the neon lights. It looks like a crystal city in the rain. The most interesting part here is the beautiful flower gardens and lovely French architecture. Here we also have some unspoiled primitive forests where you can experience biodiversity, and see a lot of different flowers and plants.

○ There are many well-known tourist attractions there such as the pagodas, the waterfalls, the lakes, etc.

○ If you visited my home town, I would recommend that you visit ...

○ There are several ... in my home town, such as ... The most famous ones are ...

- What kind of jobs do people do in your home town?
- Can you describe the people in your home town?
- What are the people like in the region where you live?

○ Well, like people in other cities, people in my home town do a variety of jobs. Most of them work as workers or professionals, some are involved in managerial and professional work and others are craftsmen or general labourers.

○ It's a bit hard to say. People there are generally very friendly and helpful. If you were to visit Hue, you'd soon notice its severe weather with boiling hot days in the summer, and ceaseless raining weeks in the winter, but I think Hue people do not often complain or cry over things. Instead, they keep troubles for themselves and find a way to get over it on their own. In my opinion, that's something to do with the weather there. Other than that, there's not much difference between us and those in other regions.

○ Yes, I'd like to. People there are very + adj. (generous, hospitable, hard-working, open-minded, warm-hearted, down to earth, practical, poverty-stricken, etc.).

- Has your home town changed a lot in recent years?
- What changes have taken place in your home town?

○ Yes. It has seen a lot of changes. With economic development booming, people's living standards have been greatly improved.

- It has become an important economic, commercial and political centre in the southern part of Vietnam.
- Since the reform and the open-door policy, great/profound changes have taken place in my home town. The most obvious ones are that the roads are getting wider and better, and buildings are getting higher and higher. Meanwhile, more and more automobiles are running on the expressways now, and people's living standards have been greatly improved.
- People in my home town are quite open-minded and ready to accept new things.
- This once closed village in a remote area is beginning to open up to the outside world. They are learning about computer skills, English and driving skills, which were brand new to them not long ago, but now, they want to keep up with the times.

• What are the advantages and disadvantages of your home town?

- It has the advantages of being a special economic zone with modern transportation and communication, mild climate and a favourable economic environment. But it is seriously polluted. Some people suffer a lot, especially those with asthma or bronchitis.

• What do you think is the most serious problem in your home town?
• What are the major social problems in your home town? How can they be solved?

- Just like many other cities in the world, Ho Chi Minh City has some serious social problems. Take pollution as an example. Heavy pollution of air, water, and noise has become one of the most serious problems, doing a lot of harm to the environment. Another problem is traffic jams. In my opinion, developing the infrastructure, reducing the number of cars, and using buses will all help solve the problems.
- Well, the most serious problem, I think, is overpopulation, which has exerted a lot of pressure on employment, infrastructure, and education.

• Please tell me something about the customs in your home town.

- Yes. We have a great many customs there. Let me tell you something about the lucky money on New Year's Eve. Unlike the other parts of Vietnam, in my home town, the unmarried adults as well as children can get the lucky money given by other family members or friends. It is believed the money will bring them good luck in the coming new year.

- Can you tell me something about the architecture in your home town?

○ Yes. We have different architectural styles in my home town incorporating traditional and modern styles. In one part of the town, we have very modern architecture such as high-rise or multi-storey buildings with state-of-the-art facilities. However, in the centre of the town, we still keep a lot of the traditional wooden buildings with carved doors and windows and very delicate craftsmanship. These traditional buildings have been renovated very frequently and have become quite an important part of the town culture. In my opinion, without these traditional buildings, the town will lose its identity as all the modern buildings look so much alike.

- How does your home town compare with ...?
- What's the difference in ... between your home town and ...?

○ Well, I like ... better/prefer ... as there are more opportunities for jobs, education, and entertainment.

○ It's hard to say. Both have advantages and disadvantages. You see, ...

Suggestions

- Be prepared to talk about the points below:

Location
Size
Population
Climate
Geographical features
Natural resources
Characteristics of the city or country
Places of interest
Importance

- Use the present simple to talk about your home town. Use the past simple and the present perfect to describe changes.

- Use the statements below to talk about your home town or where you are living:

My home town is ..., a small/medium-sized town in the southwestern part of this province, with a population of about ... million.

It lies/is located/situated in the southeast of XX Province.

It is very + adj. (e.g. comfortable, convenient, etc.) living there.

It is a/an + adj. (e.g. good, nice, quiet, etc.) place to live in.

Living there is + adj. (e.g. interesting, fascinating, etc.).

I lived there for ... years. ... years ago, I moved to ...

I have been living there since I was born in ...

My home town is well known/famous for ... throughout Vietnam/all over the world.

It is rich in ... It has a long history of ... dating back to the ... century.

... is the best of my home town ... You see, ... has become one of the main resources of local economic revenue and contributes a lot to the city development.

Useful Words and Expressions

100 kilometres northwest of	main crop
advantage	main tourist attractions
appealing/pleasant place	medium-sized city
birthplace	natural resources
densely populated	scenery
disadvantage	sparsely populated
economic, cultural and political centre	to be adjacent to
heavily polluted	to be brought up
heavy/light industries	to be famous for
home town	to be located/situated in
international trade	to be rich in natural resources/mineral deposits
in the vicinity (neighbourhood) of	to be well known for
landscape	to grow up
local people	within walking distance

Exercises

1. If your examiner asks you to tell him/her about a topic, he/she is expecting a detailed description. Look at the two dialogues below.

(1)

Interviewer: Can you tell me something about the food in your country?

Candidate: Well, it's very famous.

Interviewer: Why is it famous exactly?

Candidate: Because it tastes good.

Interviewer: Are there any special ingredients which make it taste good?

Candidate: Yes, of course.

Interviewer: Can you give me some examples?

Candidate: Well, we use spices a lot.

(2)

Interviewer: Can you tell me something about the food in your country?

Candidate: Ah, yes. We're famous for our cooking. We have a lot of very spicy food which some foreigners find too hot, but the spices are essential for the flavours we like. We like meat a lot, but beans are also important in our dishes.

Now, compare the two dialogues and see which is better. Why? What are your comments?

2. Practise answering the following questions about "name".

What is your full name?

How do I pronounce your name?

Does your name have any special meaning?

What's the literal translation/meaning of your name?

Traditionally, are there any rules for choosing a child's name in Vietnam?

What were your parents' hopes and wishes for you when they gave you this name?

II. Marriage and Family

Concerning this topic, you may be asked to describe your family by telling whether you have a large or small family, how much time you spend with your family, whether you get along well with your family. Sometimes, you may be asked to talk about changes in family life. Also, questions related to marriage may be posed, such as the attitude towards marriage in your country, some advantages or disadvantages of marriage, whether the divorce rate is high in your country, or your opinion on divorce, etc.

Let's now talk about your marriage and family.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- **Are you married or single?**
- **Can you tell me something about your marriage/marital status?**

  - Oh, I'm engaged but I'm not married yet. We plan to get married this May after I have taken the IELTS test.
  - We fell in love with each other at first sight and got married half a year later.
  - I have been married for about 8 years. We got married in my home town, where we had a large reception for our relatives and friends.

- Can you tell me what happens at a wedding?

○ Well, it varies from place to place and from time to time. But usually a wedding begins early in the morning. The bridegroom, together with some of his relatives and friends, has to pick up the bride and her family from her home with beautifully-decorated cars. Then, the two families and friends will usually have a banquet together.

- How about your wedding?
- Describe your wedding. Was there any kind of ceremony?

○ As for my wedding, I had a very simple ceremony. I just invited some of our colleagues and relatives to enjoy a cup of tea and some candies because I had just graduated from university, and we did not have a lot of money. My wife looked very pretty in traditional "Ao Dai", so glamorous. And I was also very handsome in my black suit. We both looked great. We spent our honeymoon in Da Lat City, a well-known destination for honeymooners.

- How have people's attitudes towards wedding ceremonies changed in Vietnam?

○ I think people have really changed their attitudes towards wedding ceremonies. As time goes on, people have paid so much attention to how the wedding can be presented. But 30 years ago, even 10 years ago, people would like to have a simple wedding so that they could save the money for future family expenditure. Nowadays, weddings can be extremely fanciful and extravagant. They would hire luxurious cars, invite as many guests as possible, and get the most expensive reception dinner. Well, it's certainly understandable that with the improvement of people's living standard, they can afford all these.

- What are people's attitudes towards divorce?

○ Well, nowadays, people are more open to this issue. They no longer regard it as a disaster or the end of the world. But women used to be the victims of divorce as they were economically dependent. The divorced women would be humiliated since others always put the blame on the women. So, a woman would not choose to leave the husband for the sake of the children and herself no matter how much suffering she had in her marriage. Nowadays, as women enjoy equal rights and economical independence, they would want a divorce for the sake of their children and their own happiness if they are not happy with their marriage. They think that it's simply a fact of life. If there is no longer any love, they'd better separate and give freedom to each other.

- At what age can people be allowed to get married in Vietnam?
- Did you have to ask for permission from your parents before you got married?

○ Usually, the minimum age limit for a man is 20 and a woman is 18. But now, many people prefer to get married later than that. I did not have to ask for permission from my parents but I did ask them for their approval to show my respect.

- Could you tell me something about your family?
- Do you live in a big or small family?

○ Yes. I have a small happy family. My wife works as a nurse in the local hospital and our son, 7 years old, goes to school every day. He is very cute.
○ Yes. I'm the only child of the family and I'm still single, so I live together with my parents who have just retired.
○ I live in a big family, the so-called extended family, with my grandparents, my uncle and aunt living together. We are very close-knit and quite happy.
○ My mother is very sociable, but my father prefers to do his gardening quietly.
○ My parents used to work in a state-run enterprise as engineers, but now they are both retired.

- Does your name affect your personality?
- Did you take your family name from your mother or father?

○ Well, that's an interesting question. I don't think a name can affect a person's personality. But some people believe it can.

- In what situation will one change his name?

○ In Vietnam, there are several reasons why one will change his name. First of all, a child in his mother's custody may take his stepfather's family name if his mother was divorced and got remarried. A person may also like to change his name for his belief in superstition. When he is in trouble, he may consult some fortune-tellers to find a way out of the trouble. In this case, he is likely to change his name for the sake of good fortune. Another situation I can think of is that a criminal may wish to change his name for illegal reasons.

- **Do you prefer a big family or a small one? Why?**

  - I prefer to have a small family, the so-called nuclear family. For one thing, it's the state recommendation that one couple should have two children, no more. For another, I like children a lot. I believe my child is the continuation of my life. Finally, with a child, I feel that I take my family more seriously knowing that I have someone to care for.
  - I like to have a DINK family. As you can see, I am too young and not ready to have a family. Also, I always feel that I'm the one who needs a lot of care. Why don't we just work and enjoy? In this way, I can spare some time to learn some skills in order to keep up with the times.

- **How has family structure changed in the recent decades in Vietnam?**

  - Well, family structure in Vietnam has changed a lot, generally from big to small. You see, we Vietnamese used to have extended families with a few generations living together. But as time goes on, people need to move with jobs and small families are more common as they're easily mobile.

- **Who does most of the shopping/cooking/housework in the family?**

  - Definitely my wife as she works .../has more spare time /I'm just too busy. But when I have time, I do share some of the housework.

- **Do you think couples should share the housework or should the wife take the main responsibility?**

  - Yes. Couples should be equal in the family, so they should share the housework. But it is understandable that when one is very busy, the other has to do more.

- **Who makes most of the decisions in your family, your mother or your father? Why?**

  - My mother makes most of the decisions about trivial matters. But when it comes to important decisions, both of them will discuss and exchange ideas and make decisions together.

- Are there many rules for children in Vietnam?
  - There're some but not so many. For example, children should respect the seniors and have good manners. I suppose children all over the world do this.

- Has this changed very much recently?
  - Some rules have changed but others are still the same. For example, children in the past should only be seen but not be heard, otherwise they would be severely punished. But now, children can play freely, which is quite good I think, because it can facilitate their creativity and improve the rapport between parents and children.

- Who is the person that has influenced you most in your family?
  - Definitely my father/mother. He/She was very strict with us but always so helpful. Whenever I had any problem in my study, he/she would help me out through discussion.
  - He/She is so hard-working and understanding. Although we lived a simple life, we lived in happiness and harmony thanks to his/her diligence, independence and optimism. I learn from him/her to be optimistic and independent.

- Can you describe a most important decision you have made recently?
  - The most important decision I have made in my life so far is the one I made about going abroad to study. Before I made this decision, I had considered it for a long time, nearly one year. I felt that what I had learned in the university is inadequate for my work now, so I really need to improve myself about the knowledge in relation to tourism and hospitality management. I know Britain is very good in this field, so I decided to pursue my further study in the UK. This decision is very important to me and to my future career. As I know, with the expertise I have acquired from my study abroad, I can fulfil my work and meet any challenge in my career. Apart from these, I can get a better position and a higher pay. So, I think this decision is very good and important for me.

Suggestions

- When talking about your family members, you may use **There + be ...**
- Talking about your age, you may use **... years old, in one's (early / mid / late) twenties,** etc.
- Indicating your married life, you can say:

  I got married 2 years ago.

  They've just got married.

  I have been married to a lawyer for 4 years.

  I am engaged to a doctor.

  They've just got engaged.

- Most often, you should use the present simple to talk about your family, and the present perfect or past simple is employed to discuss changes. The past simple must be used to talk about things happening in the past.

Useful Words and Expressions

Marriage

arranged marriage
be engaged; engagement
best man
bride
bridegroom
bridesmaid
cohabitation; living together
divorce rate
dowry
early/late marriage
free marriage
honeymoon
lady of honour
marital status
marriage certificate
marriage licence
marriage registration
married
remarriage
single
spouse
to be divorced; to be a divorcee
to be separated; to live in separation
wedding cake
wedding ceremony
wedding dress
wedding feast
wedding gift
wedding ring

Family

adopted daughter/son
birth control policy
close-knit
DINK family (Double income no kids)
extended family
family structure

family tree	parents (father, mother)
foster father	retired
foster mother	single-parent family
grandparents (grandfather, grandmother)	stepfather
harmonious	stepmother
immediate family	to be a breadwinner of the family
in-laws (father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law)	to be on very intimate terms with each other
nuclear family	to bridge the generation gap
one couple, one child	to live on pension/social welfare
overpopulation	to make ends meet

Exercises

1. **Personal information: Fill in the following form and practise asking your classmates questions on "personal information".**

Surname

First name(s)

Address

Telephone

Date of birth

Marital status

Qualifications

Degree subject

Special subject

Institution

Work experience:

Post

Employer

Length of service

Post _____

Employer _____

Length of service _____

Post _____

Employer _____

Length of service _____

2. **Family and hobbies: Often, the examiner will ask you about your family and hobbies as a way of getting to know you. Talk about your family members and their hobbies or habits by using the following expressions:**

I/He/She usually just ... and then ...

During ... I/he/she often ...

Whenever I/he/she can, I/he/she ...

My/His/Her ... usually involves ...

When/While I'm/he's/she's not ..., I/he/she usually ...

If I have/he/she has ..., I/he/she might ...

Family member	Age	Job/School	Point of interest	Home town	Ambition
Mother	*45*	*Accountant*			

III. Child and Childhood

As far as this topic is concerned, the following issues may be raised: how you looked when you were a child, how much you recall your childhood, what is one of your special memories about your childhood, which made you ashamed or proud, whether you think childhood is the best period of one's life. To those who are married, they may be asked to talk about how they have educated their children; or they may be requested to make a comparison between children in the modern time and those in the past, etc.

Let's now talk about your child and childhood.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- What are your hopes/ambitions for your child?
- What hopes do your parents have for you?

- My hopes for my child? Well, I hope that she can be happy all her life.
- Well, my parents hope that I can go abroad to study to fulfil their dream/live a full and happy life.

- In what kind of environment do you like your child to grow up in?
- What sort of culture do you hope your child will grow up?

- I'd like my son to grow up in a pleasant environment, but I have to be very careful not to spoil him. As you know, excessive love or permissiveness may mislead the child.
- I hope my child will still know about Vietnam's ancient culture and traditions, but also have a chance to combine them with aspects of modern society. I don't want him to just accept everything that is "Western" and throw away everything that is "Vietnamese". I want my child to be proud of his Vietnamese heritage, but also to be able to combine the best from the West and the East.

- As a parent, do you plan to do anything different for your child than your parents did for you?

- Yes, of course. I will communicate more openly with my child and give him more compliments and praise. When I was young, my parents had to work very hard to make both ends meet. They could not spare more time for their children, never asking me how I was feeling and things like that. They rarely complimented me for anything, though I know they loved me very much. But there was lack of communication and I often felt neglected. Now, I'd like to bring up my child differently from the way I was brought up. I want him to develop imagination, creativity, perseverance, and independence.

- How is your life different from the lives of your parents when they were at your age?

- Oh, there's so much difference. I have had many more opportunities and a much more comfortable life than they had. In my parents' time, there was not much entertainment

or opportunities for work or education. The living standard was not very high. I remember my mother telling me stories about having one egg to eat for her birthday, a luxury at that time. I can't really imagine a life like that, so I'm grateful that I have a better life than my parents had.

- What about your own childhood? Where did you grow up?
- Where did you spend your childhood?/ Where were you brought up?

- I was born in this city, but we moved to ... when I was ... years old, because ... So, I grew up in ... Now, I consider ... as my home town.
- I was born in ..., but I spent my childhood in another city, for I lived with my grandparents.
- I lived in ... since I was born, and I never moved to other places. So, I spent my childhood in my home town.
- I spent my childhood in my birthplace, but I went to another city to study/work.
- I was born in Thanh Hoa Province. When I was 6 years old, my parents moved to Hai Phong City with their factory. So, I was brought up there until I left for Ha Noi to study at the age of 19.

- Do you regard it as a happy period of your life?

- Well, I'd say yes. At that time, we did have our moments, the exciting games, my peers, outdoor activities, everything. I was so carefree and happy though I have to admit that we didn't have the kind of material things like toys, candies and the like.

- Were you a good student? What are your strongest memories of your schooldays/ childhood?
- How did you use to spend your time?/ How did you usually spend your time?
- How did you enjoy your student days? Did you work hard?

- Yes, I was a good boy with a very brilliant academic record. My parents were almost illiterate, so they placed all their hopes on me and said that the only way that I could change my fate was studying hard. All I could remember about my schooldays was that the teachers had such a difficult time keeping order as there were some kids who did not want to study and always made trouble.
- I spent most of my time on study as you can imagine, but I also helped my parents by doing a lot of farm work in the fields.

- Did you ever do anything to make your parents angry?
  - Oh, never. I have always been filial and obedient.
  - Yes, on a couple of occasions. Once I went back with a very bad school report and I can still see the disappointment in the eyes of my mother, though she didn't say a word. I knew that I had let her down. The other thing that is still in my memory is that my father got so angry when I did not take his advice to marry the girl my parents had arranged for me. I told him that I wanted to marry the one I loved, not the one they liked.

- Is there anything you regret about your childhood, or your young days?
  - Yes. I didn't have the chance to learn to play some musical instruments. I wish I had learned how to play the violin. I wish I could have continued my training in basketball. I was a very good basketball player in the middle school.
  - Not at all. I like the thing as it is. I wouldn't want to change a thing.

- Do you think life is very different for young people nowadays?
  - Yes. Nowadays, the young have a lot more opportunities for education and entertainment, compared with what I had before. But to be honest, I like my simple but more interesting life. Children of today are always burdened with a lot of homework and extracurricular hobby training, and they are so lonely, contacting friends only through e-mail and telephone. In my time, we had a lot of face-to-face communication, and we played together a lot more. We were better off spiritually but not materially.
  - Well, they are a lot happier today with their new computerised toys, games, and candies. Above all, they have dreams, dreams of going abroad to study, of becoming a millionaire.

- How does your experience of your own childhood influence the way you'd like to bring up your child?
  - Well, I don't have a child now. If I had a child, I think my experience would certainly influence how I would bring up my child. As I didn't have a happy childhood, I'd like my child to enjoy his/her childhood without any worry or anxiety. I will not force him/her to learn this or that. He/She can learn what he/she likes.
  - I'd like my child to fulfil my dreams: to be successful in his academic study and career. I didn't have the money and opportunity then, but now, I will provide everything for his education and development.

Suggestions

- When talking about your childhood, you may mention the following points:

  Time

  Location

  Playmates

  Nursery, kindergarten, primary school

  Teachers

  Schoolmates, classmates

  Events, happenings, etc.

- The examiner may ask you:

  – to present your opinion about the past (e.g. how you feel about ...), about how to bring up a child compared with that of the past;

  – to make a comparison between your childhood and that of your parents' or grandparents'.

- When talking about your childhood, you have to use the past tenses correctly.

  Remember the following structures:

  I remember + V-ing ...

  As far as I can remember, ...

  In those days, ...

  I think generally I had a/an + adj. + childhood.

  I regret + V-ing ...

  I wish I had done/could have done ...

Useful Words and Expressions

adolescent	naughty
childhood	obedient
cute	rebellion
dependent	rules and regulations
discipline	self-reliant; self-dependent
emotional problem	single-parent family
filial	the only child
generation gap	to be permissive with
independent	to have good manners
lack of communication	to spoil
law-abiding citizen	well behaved

Exercise

Practise answering the following questions. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough. You can refer to your teachers if you have difficulties.

Are children of today happier than those in the past? Why/Why not?

Do you think your childhood is a happy or miserable one? Why/Why not?

How do you see the future of family life in Vietnam?

What are the problems it raises?

How do you think those problems can be dealt with?

Do you see some drawbacks of the one-child policy in China?

How do people (father and mother) try to compensate for those problems?

Should parents be strict with their children? Why/Why not?

How far do you consider that Vietnamese social life revolves around the nuclear family?

What do you think is the best way of bringing up children?

Is it difficult to bring up children in Vietnam today? Why? What are the main difficulties?

Are there any other major influences on family life in Vietnam today?

How is family life now different from what you experienced in your own upbringing?

What changes do you foresee in the future?

IV. Weather

Weather or climate is a very common topic that is frequently given in this part of the test. You may be required to talk about what the weather is like, how many seasons your country has, what your favourite season is, whether or not the weather affects your mood, what effects of different weather conditions on people's personality are, what causes and measures against disasters or environmental pollution are, etc.

Let's now talk about the weather.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- What's the weather/climate like in your home town/city?
- Tell me something about the weather/climate in your home town.

  - The weather in my home town is quite nice actually. It is mild all the year round, neither too cold in winter nor too hot in summer. We haven't experienced any extreme weather conditions.
  - It has four clear-cut seasons. In spring, it is windy and warm, sometimes, very dusty. In summer, it is rainy and hot with a few rather humid days which can make us

very uncomfortable. In autumn, the sky is clear and sunny, but it can be very foggy on some days. In winter, it is dry and cold with the temperature going down to 10 degrees Celsius sometimes.

- Well, the weather in my home town is very similar to what we have here in this city. It's not very hot in summer – the highest about 35 degrees Celsius. In winter, it's not very cold, about 20 or 21 degrees Celsius. Spring and autumn are both mild and pleasant with temperatures ranging from 25 to 28 degrees Celsius.
- The weather in this area is always very changeable. You just can't tell what weather you will have in the next hour.
- I think the key features about the climate there is that it is very dry and windy all the year round.
- There are 4 seasons: Winter is cold, dry and windy; spring is short and rainy; summer is hot and humid with temperatures as high as 35 degrees Celsius or even 37 degrees in the sunshine, making this city one of the four furnaces in Vietnam. It can be terrible in summer unless you have air conditioning; and autumn is probably the best season – neither too hot nor too cold or humid. It's very comfortable.

• **Does your home town experience any extreme weather?**

- Fortunately, no. During the wet seasons, we do have heavy rainfall, but we have built some hydropower stations at the upper stretches of the Dong Nai River, so we can control the water volume. And of course, you can imagine during the dry seasons, we can use the water for irrigation. This river has brought us a lot of benefits: fertile land, clean surroundings, and beautiful environment.

• **What is the best time to visit your home town?**

- The best season in my home town is autumn when you can see the golden colour of harvest. All the mountains are covered in yellow due to the colour change of leaves. The average temperature is about 20 degrees. In my home town, the seasons are really distinct. Summer is very hot and humid and the temperatures can go up to 35 degrees, but never as hot as Hue or Da Nang. Winter is quite cold there, well, certainly not as cold as those places in the north of Vietnam. It seldom goes down as far as 4 or 5 degrees Celsius.
- Winter is freezing and I wouldn't recommend anyone to try to live there unless they want to challenge themselves.

- What do you think about the greenhouse effect?
- What are the common problems brought about by weather conditions in this area?

- The greenhouse effect is one of the most serious problems that we've encountered. It results from our modern lifestyle: the excessive use of automobiles, air conditioning and fridges. The temperature has gone up so much that we haven't seen snow in this area for several years.
- One of the common problems in this area, attributable to weather conditions, is the foggy weather in winter. For quite a few days, the fog can be so thick that the expressways and airports have to be closed to traffic, which can result in great economic loss. Another problem that comes into my mind is rheumatoid arthritis that many senior people suffer from due to the humidity, especially in summer.

- Is it possible to predict natural disasters to minimise the damage?

- Yes, I believe so. Actually, with the development of science and technology, scientists have successfully predicted many natural disasters such as floods, droughts, volcanoes, and earthquakes. In this way, many lives have been saved and damage minimised.

- What do you think we can do to help those people suffering from natural disasters?

- First of all, we should appeal for donation. International aid can help those people to some extent but it cannot solve all their problems. So, we should help them to build up their confidence as well as homes.
- Well, I don't think money or material things are enough. They need to depend on themselves for future development, but timely help in the form of science and technology can make the difference.

- How has the weather changed recently in Vietnam?

- Well, I think the weather has changed a lot recently. With the greenhouse effect, people can sometimes see snow in Fansipan, the highest peak in Vietnam, in winter. In summer, it is very difficult for the elderly and children to tear themselves away from air-conditioned rooms.

- **To what extent do you think people's personality can be influenced by the climate they have?**

○ I do think people can be affected very strongly by the kind of climate they have. As we know, it is very hot in Da Nang, so you can see the local people are quite straightforward, outgoing, and quick tempered, and the pitch and the speed with which they speak tend to be higher and faster, whereas here in Ho Chi Minh City where the temperature is not so high, people do not show such traits. However, in my opinion, people's personality is more strongly affected by genetic factors, family background, and also by the kind of education they receive.

Suggestions

- This topic frequently asks you to describe or to compare and contrast:

  Climate

  Seasons

  Natural disasters

- When talking about the weather, you use the present simple tense, but when discussing the weather or changes of the past or future, you have to use the past or future tenses.

- Below are some common statements you may use:

  In winter, it is colder in ... than in ...

  It's freezing in winter.

  The temperature varies greatly between day and night.

  It is mild all the year round, neither too cold in winter nor too hot in summer.

Useful Words and Expressions

abundant rainfall
acid rain
active volcano
air pollution
air purification
anti-pollution
biosphere
Celsius
changeable / bad weather
clear
cold
conservation law
continental climate
cool
desert
drizzle
drought
dry / wet season
Earth Day
earthquake

ecosystem	river pollution
endangered species	sewage disposal system
environmental sanitation	sewage; polluted water
Fahrenheit	shower
flood	stormy
foggy	stuffy
freezing	subtropical climate
frost	sunny
global warming	sunrise
gloomy	sunset
greenhouse effect	temperate climate
hail	temperature
hot	the minimum/maximum temperature
humid	the spring-like weather throughout the year
humidity	thunderstorm
hurricane	to exhaust the resources
icy	tornado
mild/agreeable weather	tropical climate
minus	typhoon
misty	under the blazing/scorching/burning sun of summer
monsoon climate	
natural disasters	vary greatly between day and night
nature reserve	volcanic eruption
No Car Day	warm
No Smoking Day	water treatment
noise pollution	wild animal
oceanic climate	wild plant
overcast	wildlife protective zone
over-exploitation	windy
rainy	

Exercises

1. Practise using the following expressions to talk about changes.

Yes, there have been a lot of changes.	... is/are less ... than before.
Yes, ... has/have changed a lot because ...	... is/are getting more and more ...
Great changes have taken place in ...	... has/have not changed much because ...
More and more ... are/have been ...	... is/are not as ... as before.

2. Describe the changes of the following topics.

home town	school / education
transport and traffic	people's eating / reading / clothing habits
living / housing conditions	sports facilities
entertainment	working environment

V. Education

This topic covers quite a wide range of subject areas. You may be asked to talk about your education, such as what kind of school you went to as a child, whether you went to a co-educational school, what your favourite subject was, who your favourite teacher was. You may also be asked to state about the educational system in your country, your opinion on whether or not your country has an effective educational system, etc.

Let's now talk about education.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- Now I'd like to hear more about you. Have you graduated or are you still studying?

  - I'm still studying in Technology University, majoring in computing technology. I have one more year before I finish.
  - I'm now in the final year of my Master programme, working on my dissertation. I enjoy my research a lot.

- Can you tell me something about your education?
- Could you tell me something about your educational background?

  - I graduated from University of Natural Sciences in 2004. My major was chemistry. By the time of my graduation, I was awarded the Bachelor of Science in the field of chemistry.
  - Well, first I went to primary and high school in my home town. Then, I took the entrance examination into Technology University, majoring in engineering. I studied water management for 4 years and graduated in 2006. After that, I went on with postgraduate courses in another university for two years.
  - Yes. After graduation from senior middle school, I went to Ho Chi Minh City University of Information Technology to study computer science for 4 years and got a Bachelor's degree. Then, I was assigned to work in the local government in Dong Nai. It was very boring, just some office work, not challenging at all. Two years later, I wanted to broaden my knowledge, so I quit my job and went to Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology for my Master's degree. Then, ever since 2003 when I joined my current company, I have been working as a programmer.

- What was/is your major?/What did you major in?/Why did you choose ... as your major?
- How do you like your major?

○ Well, my parents and my high school teacher chose it for me because I was very young then and they helped me make the decision. They said that this major would be very popular in 5 years' time, and the job opportunity would be very promising if I chose this major. And of course, they were right.

○ I chose it just because I love it. I'm always fond of meeting with people.

- What do you like most about your studies?

○ Well, there is nothing more interesting than to learn to develop software for a company. I am so surprised at the creativity and imagination these courses involve. Whenever I've finished a project, I am very happy to see my own product accepted and used by other people, actually bringing benefits to the users. That's what gives me a lot of satisfaction. And I know that's what I will do in the future.

○ I think my major is very important in the modern society, so I am continually learning more about my major. I also work hard to keep myself well informed about the latest development in this field, and try my best to keep up with the time.

- Do you have any regrets about your education?
- What was the most regretful/unforgettable experience in your college life?

○ I think the most regretful thing in my college life is that I didn't choose education as my major as I love teaching so much. I should have learned more about how to teach children.

○ Well, one thing that I regret very much is that I did not study hard enough to get the TOEFL certificate when I was in my third year.

○ No, I don't have any regrets whatsoever. I like everything as it is. I wouldn't want to change a thing.

- Do you think what you have learned at college is beneficial to your future career?

○ Yes, I think so. What I've learned at college has laid a solid foundation for my future career.

- Yes, definitely. What I have achieved today owed a lot to my college study. What I've learned in the university is more about theory, which is the basis for my further study and future practical work after graduation.
- Well, it's hard to say. You see, my major is computing science, which is developing at an accelerating pace. What I've learned at college was about theory and some findings in those days, I mean, they can be outdated very soon. After graduation, I have to orient myself more towards the market and keep working out some new things.
- No, I don't think so. You know, I majored in archaeology at college. After graduation, I found that it was really hard for me to find a satisfactory job. They have enough people doing the research, and I am not interested in excavating at the archaeological sites. What I have learned at college is of little help to me. I have to learn some new and more useful skills while working.

Suggestions

• When talking about your educational background, most of the time you have to use the past tenses. Remember to pronounce the ending sounds of the past forms of regular verbs.

• If you are still a schoolgirl or schoolboy, you can use the present tenses (simple or continuous).

• You may think about the following points in coping with this subject:

The school you attended
Campus life
Graduation
Major / minor
Courses / syllabuses
The importance of education, etc.

• You can employ the words and expressions below:

1. **benefit** *vi., vt., n.* **beneficial** *adj.*

He'll **benefit** from the experience.
The experience will **benefit** him.
It is of **great benefit** for him.
What he has learned at college is **beneficial** to his future career.

2. **graduate** *vi., n.* **graduation** *n.*

I **graduated in** computing science.

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She graduated from London University in 2003 with a Master of Science in the field of computing science.

After graduation, he found a job in a multinational company.

He went to a graduate school for his further study.

3. **major** *vi., n., adj.*

He is an English major; no wonder his spoken English is so good.

I majored in English Language and Literature, with a minor in Applied Linguistics.

I went to Ho Chi Minh City National University in 2005 with International Trade as my major.

4. **Some common expressions:**

My favourite subject(s) is(are) ...

I prefer ... though we had many compulsory and optional courses.

I've studied it for ... years.

I began to study ... years ago.

Useful Words and Expressions

Types of Schools

academy of fine arts
aeronautical institute
affiliated school
agricultural university/college
architectural engineering institute
attached middle school
boys'/girls' school
branch school
business school
cinema college
co-educational school
college of finance and economics
college/university
college/university of science and engineering
comprehensive university
conservatory of music
correspondence school
drama institute
experimental middle school
forestry institute
full-time boarding school
institute for nationalities
institute of foreign languages
institute of foreign trade
institute of traditional Chinese medicine
institution of higher learning
junior/senior middle school
key school
medical university/college
mining engineering institute
normal/teachers' university
pharmaceutical university
physical culture/education institute
polytechnic university
pre/in-service training course
primary/elementary school
secondary school
secondary specialised/technical school
short-term training course

teachers' college for vocational studies
technical school
television and radio broadcasting university
tertiary education
university of liberal arts
vocational school

Departments and Staff of a School

admissions office
board of directors
catering section
correspondence department
dean / chairman / chairperson
dean of studies
department
examining board
foreign affairs office
full / associate professor
full / part-time teacher
graduate school
head / class teacher
headmaster / headmistress; principal
lecturer
overseas students department; international students' office
president
research institute
section
security bureau
Students' Union
teaching assistant
the faculty; teaching staff
the finance office
the general affairs office
the teaching affairs office
vice president
visiting / guest professor

Students and Studies

accounting and statistics
acoustics
archaeology
architecture
atomic energy
Bachelor's degree
banking
basic / specialised course
biochemistry
biology
business administration
career
certificate
chemical engineering
chemistry
civil engineering
curriculum design
diploma
Doctoral degree
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
elective / optional course
electrical engineering
electronic engineering
English
extracurricular activities
finance
first-year student; freshman
fourth-year student; senior
geography
graduation
history
international relations
international trade
journalism
linguistics
literature

major
mass media
Master of Arts (MA)/Science (MS)
Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Master's degree
mathematics
mechanical engineering
minor
optics
philosophy
physics
postgraduate
psychology
qualifications
required/compulsory course
scholarship
second-year student; sophomore
seminar
sociology
supervisor
teaching programme; syllabus
thesis; dissertation
third-year student; junior
tuition
tutorial
to attend a lecture
to consult reference books in the library
to get access to the Internet for information
to take notes
undergraduate

Types of Education

adult education
continuing education
distance education
education in patriotism/collectivism/internationalism
exam-oriented education
forced-feeding teaching method
full-time education
ideological/ethical education
9-year compulsory education
online education
preschool education
quality education
teach/work for exams
vocational and technical education

Types of Exams and Related Expressions

academic/school record
credit (system)
make-up examination
mark; grade
mid-term/final exam
national college entrance examination
open-book exam
placement test
proficiency test
school report; report card; transcript
self-taught examination
TOEFL/TOEIC/IELTS

Exercise

Practise asking and answering the following questions on education. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

Do you have any regrets about your education?

If you had children, how would you like to see them educated?

What kind of education should be provided for very young children?

How is the present education system different from the one you went through?

Do you think the Vietnamese education system is successful on the whole? What are the major problem(s)?

What do you see as the major problem(s) in educating children in Vietnam today?

What are your priorities in providing your child's education?

Do you think that the present education system is keeping pace with the changes in modern life?

How far do you think education can alleviate the social problems in present-day Vietnam?

Do you think that the present education system exerts too much pressure on today's children?

What are the causes for the parents' increased spending on children's education?

What changes do you expect/hope to see in the future?

In general, how do you think the education system will change in the future?

How do you think education in Vietnam could be improved generally in the future?

What are the qualities of a good teacher, do you think?

Why do so many people want to become teachers nowadays?

What are the pros and cons for being a teacher?

What are the major similarities or differences between a public and a private school/a single-sex school and a mixed-sex school?

What are the advantages and disadvantages for an individual to study abroad?

Day 4 Part 1 – Common Topics (2)

VI. Work

Work is an important part of human life. It involves jobs and responsibilities at work. You may be asked to describe the process of getting a job in your country or to describe the company or organisation you work for. If you are still a student, you should think of and talk about your future job and similar issues as above.

Let's now talk about work.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- Do you work or are you a student?
- Where do you work? / What do you do? / What do you do for a living? / What is your job? / Could you tell me something about your job? / What is your line of business?
- Now, I'd like to know something about you. Do you work or study?

- I'm working for a big multinational company as a manager. It's a fairly large company with an office newly established in this area, specialising in selling Japanese cars to big cities in Vietnam. Most of our clients are from these cities, but we also have a lot of chain stores in other cities.
- Just after my graduation in 2000, I published a paper based on my final-year research project, which helped me get a job in a multinational company in Ho Chi Minh City, where I still work.
- I joined a joint venture as a salesperson for their products. Soon afterwards, I was promoted to be an area sales manager. But two years later, I resigned to study for a Master's degree. I joined this company because of the prospects it offered.
- Following my graduation, I was assigned to work in a middle school as a teacher of chemistry. I resigned after 4 years to work for my Master's degree, after which I went to work in a shareholding corporation in Dong Nai, where I still work.

- What does your work involve?
- What exactly do you do every day?
- What are some of your responsibilities? Can you tell me about your work routine?

- My work involves making computer programs for my colleagues and doing market research.
- I'm a secretary to the manager. I have to type some business letters, and arrange meetings, interviews, appointments and schedules for him.

- I worked as a systems analyst in a computer company, but changed my career in 2003. I now lead a team of IT talents to work on projects making specialised programs for educational purpose.
- I often have to advise my clients on how to improve their productivity.
- Well, I'm in charge of office management, making plans for sales campaigns or promotions, meeting with our clients and sending the feedback from the staff and our clients. So every day, I go to work at 8 o'clock. Then, I check my e-mails or any instructions from my boss. After that, I will walk around the office to collect some sales information for analysis. At 9 o'clock, I usually sit in front of the computer studying the data and making analysis. Then, I'll give instructions to the staff about the major things we should do on that day. Sometimes, I have to surf the Internet to get some information about the latest development in the field. The lunch break is from 12 to 1 in the afternoon. I usually meet our clients in the afternoon and we finish work at 5 o'clock. Anyway, it's quite a demanding job, but I enjoy meeting challenges.

- Is your job something you always wanted to do?
- Do you always enjoy your job?
- How do you like your job?
- Why did you choose this profession?

- Yes. I'm a tour guide. To be a tour guide is what I've always dreamed of since I was a child. I enjoy visiting the places of interest, meeting people and tasting exotic food. As a tour guide, I can do all these.
- No, I'm afraid not. That's why I'm taking this exam to study abroad. I don't like neither the kind of office politics nor the promotion system here.
- Well, it's hard to say. To be frank, the job is quite easy, and my colleagues and my boss are very kind to me. Also, we have very good working environment. But I'm afraid I have to find a more challenging job if I want to achieve my self-fulfilment.

- What do you like most about your job?

- Well, the best thing I like about my job is to see the increase of the sales volume and the satisfaction of the clients. As you know, marketing is my major in the university, and I love to see the share of the market for my company going up year by year. It has proved my competence, diligence, and intelligence. To be frank, working in a multinational company is quite challenging, but the pay is pretty good, much better than it was when I worked for a state-run enterprise.

- Are there any things you don't like about your work?
- Is there anything you don't like about your job?
- What gives you the least job satisfaction?

- Well, yes. I hate working overtime. You see, if I want to increase the sales volume, I have to get involved in some complicated personal relationship. I have to take the clients to the restaurants. Too much drinking and eating is quite harmful to my health.
- I'm often under a lot of stress. /My job's very stressful.
- The most difficult part of my job is keeping a good personal relationship with my colleagues, though, in fact, I get on well with all my colleagues.

- How long do you think you will stay in this job?
- Have you ever thought of changing your job/career?
- Have you ever considered doing a different job?

- I don't think I'll stay in this job for very long. I'm planning to go abroad to study, and then I'd like to work in a multinational company.
- I love my job, so I think I'll never transfer to another job. I believe this is my lifelong career.
- Well, I think I'll stay in this job for a couple of years because I need to gain experience. Then if possible, I will take some in-service training.

- When were you promoted?

- I got my first promotion in 2005 when I became an area sales manager, and I was promoted to a regional sales director last year.

- What's your ideal job?
- What is the ideal career you would like to do in the future?
- What type of work would you like to do in the future?
- What are you hoping to do in the future?
- How do you want to develop your future career?

- I want to be a computer programmer. As a computer programmer, I can work on some interactive educational software for children. I like computer and want to work with something challenging.

- To be a teacher is my ideal career. I admire people who work with lively children every day and see them change and grow. While working with children, I can share with them knowledge as well as points of view.

- What do you need to do that?
- What qualifications do you need to do that?
- What qualifications do you need to fulfil your work?

- Well, first of all, I need a Master's degree in education. If I want to be a successful teacher, experience in teaching is equally important.
- I think I need to be competent in both English and computer operation.

- What gives you job satisfaction?
- What is the benefit/satisfaction/pleasure that you gain from your job?

- It is self-fulfilment that brings me pleasure. Whenever I see my clients using my software in their work, I feel so happy.
- Well, I'm so delighted when my students achieve good grades. You know, it is not the financial reward but the psychological well-being that really counts. Teaching gives me a sense of accomplishment.

Suggestions

• Talking about your current job, you should use the present tenses. If you talk about your future job, think about appropriate future tenses.

• You may use the following expressions when mentioning jobs:

I am a/an + (job).

I work in + (work unit/department).

My work involves + V-ing (specific work).

My daily/routine work/duty is to + V (specific work).

I'm in charge of/My responsibility involves/includes ...

• Stating your likes or dislikes about your job, you may employ the following cues:

I like/dislike (I'm satisfied/dissatisfied with) my present job because ...

My job satisfaction/dissatisfaction comes from ...

- You may point out some causes that make you like or dislike a certain job:

Salary, bonus
Working condition
Working hours, overtime work
Types of work
Responsibility and security
Health care
Welfare
Holiday and annual vacation
Promotion and in-service training

- If you are still a school student, you should speculate upon the job you may be interested in, the relation between what you are planning to study or your area of specialisation and the job you may apply for in the future, etc.

Useful Words and Expressions

Enterprises and Institutions

automobile industry
bureau; administration
ceramics industry
collective enterprise
computer network system company
department; section; branch
electronics industry
factory; plant; mill; work
food-processing industry
foodstuff industry
foreign-funded enterprise
handicraft industry
hi-tech group company
hospitable industry
insurance company
joint venture
leather industry
light/heavy industry
limited company
military industry
multinational company
petrochemical industry
pharmaceutical industry
privately-owned enterprise
self-employed
shareholding corporation
software development company
state-run/owned enterprise
telecommunications industry
textile industry
timber industry

Jobs and Professional Titles

administration assistant
administrative personnel
administrator
architect
auditor
bank clerk
blue-collar worker
bonus; premium

business management personnel
cashier
chairman of the board; chief executive
challenging
challenging and interesting job
chief engineer
chief/certified public accountant
civil/public servant
client
colleague
computer programmer
computer system engineer/analyst
customer
day/night shift
demanding
department head
dismiss; fire; sack
division/section chief; director
employee
employer
engineer
executive director
factory director
fashion designer
finance director
full-time job
general manager
high/low-paid job
insurance agent
journalist
junior/senior clerk
labour insurance
long-term security and pension
maintenance worker
marketing/sales/business manager/ executive
mechanic
office clerk
office facilities
office worker
ongoing assessment by employer
operator
opportunities for promotion
opportunities to travel overseas
overtime pay
part-time job
press photographer
professional
progressive and dynamic organisation
promotion
prospects
quality control inspector
receptionist
researcher
resign
salary; wage
salesman/saleswoman
scientific and technological worker
secretary of the Party committee
section chief/head
section/department manager
self-fulfilment
senior accountant
skilled worker
social worker
software/project engineer
stress
technician
to be laid off; to be made redundant
tour/tourist guide
unemployment; to be out of work
white-collar worker
work/working environment
work pressure
working conditions

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Exercise

Talk about your routine work and habits by imitating the following expressions.

1. **Routines and habits**

When I'm not working/studying, I usually like to surf the Internet.

In my spare time, I usually just relax at home and watch TV.

I usually get up around 6:30 and then get ready for work.

While I'm at work, I usually wear formal clothes/casual clothes/uniforms.

2. **Duration**

I've been working/living/studying in Ha Noi for about 5 years.

I studied/worked/lived there for about 3 years.

I stayed in Ha Noi for about a month.

I've worked/studied in this company/university since 2006.

VII. City or City Life

City or city life is one of the most common topics in Speaking tests. The questions most likely centre round the advantages and disadvantages of living in big cities, your preferences, i.e. where you prefer to live, the changes you have witnessed, or what you expect to see in the future, etc.

Let's now talk about city or city life.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- Do you like living in a big city? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in a city?
- Where do you prefer to live, in a city or in the country?

◦ I like living in a city for the following reasons: first of all, there are more job opportunities for me there. Besides, I can get easy access to all kinds of information. Another reason is the convenience it provides me: transport, communication, shopping, and education, etc. Finally, the cultural life here attracts me a lot: the entertainment and different bars to meet people and English corners to learn English. Of course, the country has its advantages: the clean and fresh air, quiet and peaceful fields, the greenery and leisurely pace of living. But for a young person like me, I really prefer city life for my career development.

◦ Yes. I prefer to live in the city as city life is more interesting and exciting. Compared with country life, there are more job opportunities, more varieties of entertainment and more convenient transport in the city. But of course, there are also serious problems of pollution and traffic jams.

- What do you think about city life in Vietnam these days?

○ I think city life is becoming more comfortable these days, as we are becoming more prosperous. We can enjoy different forms of entertainment, taste the ethnic and local food, and take advantages of all kinds of opportunities for work, play, and education. But at the same time, we are meeting with some problems. The main problem is over-population. With so large a shifting population coming into the city for the limited jobs, we are now faced with an energy shortage and environmental pollution.

- What are the major social problems in this city? How can they be solved?
- What do you think are the main problems of Vietnam's big cities?
- Does your city have this problem? What are the main problems in your city? What do you think should be done about this?

○ Well, I think the major problems are overpopulation and the large number of people being laid off. But the most serious one is pollution, especially air pollution, because there are a lot of vehicles in the streets.

○ Urban dwellers are faced with a lot of problems such as pollution, unemployment, and congested traffic. Many city dwellers are thinking of moving out of the big city to the suburbs where they can enjoy more fresh air, see more greenery and have more space for themselves.

○ Overdevelopment has caused a lot of problems. Urban sprawl has taken up much of the cultivated land, depriving many farmers of their land. In the city, more and more old buildings are being pulled down to make way for the new ones.

- Has the government done anything to solve these problems?

○ Yes. The local government is making great efforts to solve these problems. Take air pollution as an example. So far, the local government has taken some effective measures and strict laws have been made, but that is far from satisfactory. The local government should provide more modern and convenient public means of transport.

- Which do you think is the best city in Vietnam?

○ In my opinion, Vung Tau is the best city in Vietnam. It is one of the newly-established economic development zones in the coastal areas. Though it is not a very big city, it is quite modern. It has a mild climate. Above all, it offers a lot of opportunities for young people like me.

- What changes have you seen in your city during the time you have lived there? What has caused these changes?
- What changes do you hope/expect to see in the future?

○ Oh, yes. Thanks to the economic reform and open-door policy, this city has seen a lot of changes. Many high-rise buildings have sprung up, with magnificent exterior and interior decorations. Streets have been broadened and public transport has greatly been improved, with new buses, double-decker buses, etc. The greatest change lies in the improvement of the living standard of the city dwellers: their life is better off, with more entertainment and sports facilities, and easier access to education and information.

○ I'm sure that in the future, people's life will be more prosperous, and the transport system will be more comprehensive, but there will be some serious problems yet to be solved, for instance, crime rate and overpopulation, which will be the major problems of the future cities.

Suggestions

• When talking about your preferences, you can use the following cues or comparative sentences:

I like ... a lot.
I like ... more than anything else.
I prefer ... to ...
I enjoy doing ...
as + adj./adv. + as
more + adj./adv. + than

• You can think about the following issues concerning this topic:

City vs. country
Future, present vs. past of a city
Facilities, infrastructure
Transport
Entertainment places
Problems in the city
How one feels about city life

• You just provide factual information in response to such questions.

Useful Words and Expressions

busy	means of transport
city square	metropolitan
commuter	municipal government
cosmopolitan	office building
crowded	outskirts
densely-populated city	public transport
dynamic	rural
entertainment/sports facilities	shifting/floating population
fast-paced	shopping mall
heavily polluted	sparsely-populated country area
high crime rate	suburbs
high-rise building	supermarket
housing condition	traffic jam
infrastructure	urban
inhabitant	urban/city dweller
living conditions	urban sprawl

Exercises

1. **Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the city and in the country by imitating the sentence patterns used in the following.**

   - The advantages of travelling by pubic transport are that it's convenient and cheap, but the disadvantages are that there is no door-to-door service and it can be very crowded.
   - The good thing about living in the city is that there are many opportunities for jobs, entertainment, and education. But the bad thing about it is that there's too much pollution.
   - While it may be nice to live in the country, I think it is quite inconvenient to travel and sometimes boring for a young person.

2. **Practise asking and answering the following questions about cities. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.**

   Do you prefer living in Ha Noi or Ho Chi Minh City? Why's that?

   But don't you think that Nha Trang is more ...?

   From the point of view of living conditions / housing / climate, which is a better place to live in, Nha Trang or Ho Chi Minh City?

   What's the significant difference between Vung Tau and Da Nang?

   What's the similarity between the two cities?

   How do you compare Ha Noi with Ho Chi Minh City?

VIII. Traffic and Transport

Traffic and transport play an important part in human life. You may be asked about the main means of transport in your city, the traffic problems and their causes, or some measures the government should do or have done to solve traffic problems in your city or country, etc.

Let's now talk about traffic and transport.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- **How do you usually get around in your home town?**

  ○ I usually go by bus as bus service in my home town is very good and buses run frequently. But sometimes, I also ride a bicycle for casual rides or shopping.

  ○ I always go to work by bike, but when I go on a business trip, I will take a train or an airplane, depending on how far I'll travel.

- **What is the main means of transport used in your city? Do you think the system is efficient enough? Why/Why not? How can it be improved?**
- **What is the most popular means of transport in your city?**
- **Can you tell me something about the transport in your city?**

  ○ The major means of transport in this city is public transport: taxis, buses, and trains. The majority of the city dwellers travel by bus. You can imagine that the buses are quite crowded. So, motorbikes have become the favourite of many people riding to and from work or school. In the rush hour, motorbike riding is faster than buses.

  ○ Well, the transport most people would choose as their favourite is motorbike. People use it practically every day to get around various places. As you know, my city is flat and suitable for motorbike riding, so it is known as the kingdom of motorbikes.

  ○ The major means of transport are motorbikes and cars. But for long distances, we prefer to travel by air, which is faster, more comfortable and, of course, more expensive. But for short distances or casual rides, many people prefer to travel by motorbike because you can get around faster and more easily.

- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of riding a motorbike?**

  ○ The main advantage a motorbike has, I think, is that it is cheap and everyone can afford it. And it is easy to get in and out of places because you can practically put it anywhere. I think the main disadvantage a motorbike has is that it can get stolen very easily even if you are very careful about it, because there are so many hardened motorbike thieves. Another disadvantage is that it causes air pollution a great deal,

- It's economical and convenient to travel by motorbike. You don't need a big parking lot to keep your motorbike in.

• What problems do you have in the transport system of your city?

- The rush hour traffic in this city is always very heavy. You can walk faster than driving a car or taking a bus. All the streets are jammed, especially in the city centre.
- The major problem is the increasing rate of car accidents, especially during holidays. People do not observe or do not attach sufficient importance to traffic rules and regulations.

• What are the causes of these problems?

- Well, there are many causes: road rage, overloading, drink-driving, and speeding. Above all, the driving test is not strict enough, thus mass-producing road killers.

• How can the problems be solved?

- The solutions should rest on people's mentality. The government has made strict laws to punish those engaged in drink-driving, and speeding. The road condition has been considerably improved, but accidents still occur just because people do not care about their own safety or that of others. So, we should raise people's awareness to observe traffic rules and regulations.
- Actually, the government has planned to build a tube system. But at the moment, there are some problems yet to be solved.
- You see, many ring roads are under construction. Special priority lanes have been introduced and flexible working hours have made it possible for citizens to travel between home and work units at different times.

• Do you think transport has changed Vietnam a lot?
• What are the major changes in transport?

- Well, there have been a lot of changes. First of all, the quality of the automobiles is much better than before. Second, a transport network has been established with high-ways and expressways linking up even the remote part of the country, and the road condition is obviously much better. And there are more people who possess private cars.

Suggestions

- Be prepared to answer the questions related to the following issues:

  Means of transport

  Advantages and disadvantages of different means of transport

  Traffic rules and regulations

  Accidents

  Problems to be solved; solutions

  Future development

- You can use the following statements in your answers:

  I often take a bus to work.

  He often goes/travels to and from work by underground.

  We want to catch the last train.

  Trains to that city run every hour on the hour.

  She has booked the flight for you.

  The train/flight has been delayed/cancelled due to the thick fog.

  With a student card, we can get cheap fare for a return ticket to big cities.

Useful Words and Expressions

ambulance	international line
arrival platform	late; behind schedule; delayed
bus station	maglev (magnetic levitation train)
bus stop	means of transport
car	mountain bike
coach; long-distance bus	non-stop flight; direct flight
commuter	on schedule
departure platform	one-man operated bus
destination	one-way ticket; single ticket
domestic line	overpass
double-decker bus	parking lot
energy sources	pavement
escalator	pedestrian
express train	public transport
ferry	rickshaw
hand luggage	ring road
infrastructure	roundabout
intersection; crossroads	round-trip ticket; return ticket

sightseeing bus	to take the train
spaceship	traffic accident
street; avenue	traffic jams; congestion
subway; tube; underground; metro	traffic lights
T-junction	traffic lights and signs
to cancel; to delay	truck; lorry
to take a taxi	zebra crossing

Exercise

Practise asking and answering questions on traffic and transport. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

How do young people travel to long distance? Why?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of travelling by public transport/cars/motorbikes? How has transport changed in Vietnam?

What's the significant change in transport between today and that of 20 years ago? Are all the changes positive?

Should the government spend more money on the development of public transport or private cars? Why?

What are the major causes of car accidents? How can we solve this problem? How can the existing transport system be improved?

IX. Tourism

Tourism is a very common topic. You may be asked if you like to travel, which place you would really like to visit and why, what some famous landmarks in your country are, how tourism has changed your country (namely, the impact of tourism on local culture, communities and the environment), what differences there are in enjoyment between a business trip and a vacation one, etc. These are the issues that ought to be well thought of in order to have satisfactory and rewarding answers.

Let's now talk about tourism.

Some sample questions and possible answers are on the next page.

- Have you travelled to different parts of Vietnam?
- Which place of interest have you visited recently?

○ Recently, I've been to Marble Mountains, the famous mountains in the south of Da Nang City in Vietnam. Every year, these mountains attract a large number of tourists from all over the world. They're marvellous. I'm really impressed by the cave entrances and numerous tunnels, and it is wonderful to climb to the summit of one of the peaks. Several buddhist sanctuaries can also be found within the mountains, making this a famous tourist destination.

- What is the most popular place that the Vietnamese people would like to visit?

○ Well, it's difficult to say. Different people have different tastes. The city dwellers would like to visit the country to relax and enjoy the beautiful, peaceful and quiet scenery, while the country people would like to go to the big cities to experience the rapidly developing city life. But many Vietnamese people nowadays would like to visit Europe or Australia to experience the exotic cultures and food.

- Where would you like to go if you had the chance?
- Where would you go if you had a lot of money?
- If you had the chance, which unusual or exotic place would you go to?
- Which parts of Vietnam/the world would you most like to visit if you had the chance?

○ If I had the chance/opportunity, I think I'd like to go somewhere in Africa.
○ I would go to Hawaii – the weather would be warm and the beaches would be nice. I'd love to see hula dancing and the palm trees.
○ Well, I would very much like to go to Bali or one of the exotic islands in that area. I've been longing for that opportunity but at the moment I can't afford it.

- Which areas of Vietnam have given you the most favourable impression?
- Which part of Vietnam is most developed / has more population?

○ I like the coastal areas better because these cities like Vung Tau offer very good opportunities for young talents. Besides, these cities are well designed and constructed.
○ Well, usually big cities are more densely populated than small cities. Take Ho Chi Minh City as an example, in 2010, nearly 7.2 million people live in this city, but some western regions are sparsely populated.

- What's the most popular tourist destination in the south of Vietnam? Why?

- I think Nha Trang City is. Nha Trang is home to many famous beautiful spots and landscapes and is a major tourist centre in Vietnam. It has beautiful beaches with fine and clean sand, and the clear ocean water with mild temperatures all the year round.
- The landscape and numerous historic sites have inspired many great works by ancient writers and calligraphers, and have long been the preferred gathering places of artists and poets.
- Actually, I have visited Sapa, a mountainous district of Lao Cai Province. Sapa District is very well known with Sapa Townlet, a beautiful and romantic resort. Visitors to Sapa in summer can feel the climate of four seasons in one day. In the morning and afternoon, it is cool like the weather of spring and autumn. At noon, it is as sunny and cloudless as the weather of summer. At night, it is usually cold as in winter.

- What do you think is the best way to travel: alone, with friends or on a package tour? And why?

- I prefer to go on a package tour. If I go on a package tour, I don't have to worry about accommodation or transport. It can save me a lot of trouble.
- I like to travel with several friends of mine. We can stay at a couple of different camping sites and explore from there. It's convenient and economical.

- Do you consider the influx of tourists to be beneficial to your city?
- Do you think there are any negative influences?
- What are the positive and negative effects of tourism?
- What impact will tourism bring to local culture, communities and environment?

- Basically, tourism is beneficial to the local people as well as to the tourists. For one thing, visitors bring money, so the local people will have more job opportunities to increase their income. For another, they can become more open-minded when they communicate with visitors.
- Negative effects should not be neglected. As an area opens to tourists, there will be more dangers of pollution, disturbing the balance of the nature. Besides, tourism can speed up the spread of diseases. AIDS is a good case in point. Finally, the life of the local inhabitants, humans and animals may be disturbed.

- Do you think travelling is a form of education? Why?
  - Yes, definitely. Because when you travel, you can learn more about the local customs, behaviour and history of a place. In this way, you can enrich your knowledge.

- Is there any difference in enjoyment between a business trip and a vacation?
  - Yes, there is. When you travel on business, you have some time limit. Above all, you're preoccupied with the ideas of your business. However, when you are on a vacation, you can be carefree and enjoy yourself to your heart's content. So, relaxation makes the difference.
  - I don't think there's any difference. Travelling at the expense of the company is an enjoyment itself.

- Do you think that tourism is suitably/efficiently handled in Vietnam today?
  - No, I don't think so. In many tourist spots, there is still not enough capacity, especially during the holidays. Besides, service is not up to standard, and the quality of the tour guides should be updated.

- Do you think that tourists are always well treated in your country?
  - Yes. Vietnamese people are always very hospitable, entertaining visitors from foreign countries with fine arts and dance as well as some good food. They're eager to welcome visitors to experience Vietnamese culture and customs while gaining more knowledge about foreign countries.

Suggestions

- In response to questions related to tourism, you often use the present tenses (simple, continuous, and perfect).

- You ought to have sufficient lexis and also extensive knowledge related to the following:

  Tourist destinations/spots

  Ways of travelling

  Tourism facilities

  Services

• Be fully aware of the terms related to tourism and use them correctly.

1. **travel** *vt., vi., n.*

   We have travelled all over the country.

   She travels to work by bike.

   Travel broadens the mind.

2. **trip** *n.*

   Mary and John are on a honeymoon trip to Paris.

3. **excursion** *n.*

   During our study in the UK, we went on a few excursions to places nearby.

4. **tour** *n.*

   We made a cycling tour of this city.

   The orchestra is currently on tour in Japan.

5. **tourism** *n.*

   The local economy is largely dependent on tourism.

6. **journey** *n.*

   Did you have a good journey?

7. **voyage** *n.*

   He tried to make a voyage across the Atlantic.

8. **Some common expressions:**

   If we take a boat trip, we can enjoy the magnificent sights along the Tien River.

   This temple has a long history dating back to the early period of the Tran Dynasty.

   This city boasts the largest and the most famous garden in the country.

   The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has placed this tourist spot on the UN list of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites.

   Most of the unearthed relics remain intact.

   The architecture of the cathedral best represents the architectural style of 15th century Europe.

   You can see the exquisitely constructed scenic spots, offering fine examples of excellent workmanship.

   Most of them feature exact replicas of the original, with white jade, marble, top-grade granite and other superior quality stones.

Useful Words and Expressions

a boat ride
a camping trip
ancient architectural complex
artefact; handicrafts
beach
beautiful mountains and clear waters
botanical garden
camping equipment
camping park
cultural heritage
excursion
famous mountain
famous mountains and great rivers
folklore; folk custom
forest
garden
garden architecture
Hoi An Ancient Town
hot springs
Hue – the Imperial City
inviting views
island
lake
lakeside rocks and rockeries
museum
national forest park
natural splendor/attraction
package tour
palace
picturesque views
places of historical interest/relics and scenic beauty
places of historical figures and cultural heritage
reasonable price
scenery with mountains and rivers; landscape
seaside resort
shrine
skiing resort
summer resort
surrounded by the hills on one side and water on the other
temple
tent
the Unification Palace
to enjoy oneself to one's heart's content
to go sightseeing
tourist attraction/destination; scenic spot; places of interest
tourist resources
traditional Vietnamese painting
travel agent
unearthed cultural relics
waterfalls

Exercise

Practise asking and answering the following questions. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

What is the most interesting place you have been to?
How did you travel there?
When did you go there?
Why did you like travelling?
With whom do you usually go?

What do you think is the most important thing to take with you when travelling, apart from your passport and money?

Where would you most like to go?

Which country would you most like to live in?

X. Technology and Skills

In the modern time, technology has a remarkable influence on human life. The examiner may want to listen to your opinion about the skills you have learnt or will learn, or your computer skill. Possibly, you may be asked to talk about the impact of computers, such as whether they help society, if they are bad for health, or whether computers have changed the world, etc.

Let's now talk about technology and skills.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- What skill have you learned recently?
- What skill would you like to learn in the near future? Why?

  - I've just learned how to use a computer to go online. This is a very useful skill, for it will save me a lot of time to collect materials for my research project.
  - In the future, I'd like to learn how to cook good dishes for my family. So far, I've been preoccupied with my work, and there's no time for me to learn how to cook.

- What are the most popular skills in your country?

  - Undoubtedly, the most popular skills people want to learn in Vietnam include driving, English and computer, the three basic skills for people to survive in the new millennium. So wherever you go, you can see people busy learning these skills.
  - The use of computers has become a necessary skill in today's world, which has exerted a great pressure on those who cannot use it. Those who cannot use computers will be seriously disadvantaged.

- Does technology make your life easier or more difficult? How?

  - Technology has certainly made our work and life easier, more convenient and comfortable. A good case in point is the electrical appliances used at home, such as washing machine and microwave oven, which are labour saving and quite efficient.

- Automation has greatly improved the productivity in the factories, but at the same time, it has taken away the jobs from the workers as it has greatly reduced the number of workforce.
- With the information superhighway, we can get easy access to a broad range of information.
- Well, I'd say it has made our life physically easier. With a washing machine, a dishwasher and a microwave oven, we don't need to do so much tedious and dreary work such as washing clothes, cooking meals or washing up after meals. But it has also made our life more difficult to some extent. For example, we depend so much on computers, if there is anything wrong with the computer, you can imagine the chaos. With the introduction of each technology, there will be some requirement for us. The psychological pressure has become so great.

• Will computers replace human teachers in education in the future? Why/Why not?

- Yes, I think so. Computers have already been extensively used in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. Also the programmes have been made very interactive. Students can get easy access to the large amount of information. By using computers, we can save a lot of human resources.
- No, I don't think so. It is true that computers have been extensively used in the classroom, but they are used only at the basic or elementary level. Computers can decide whether you are wrong or right, but they can never tell you why. So, in the future, I think computers can only be used to solve some problems but not to explain concepts or reasons.

Suggestions

• To answer questions related to this topic, you have to use the present and future tenses.

• This is somewhat a complicated issue. You, therefore, should provide yourself with a comprehensive knowledge on the following areas:

Science and technology in daily life
Impact of science and technology on work and life
Development of technology
Its advantages and disadvantages
Future development
Attitudes towards science and technology

- It is a good idea for you to use the verbs and phrases below:

1. **facilitate** *vt.*

   Computers can **facilitate** data processing.

   Your participation in this survey would **facilitate** our investigation.

2. **enable** *vt.*

   Computer-Aided Design (CAD) **enables** engineers to design their projects more efficiently and effectively.

   This facility can **enable** you to hear better.

3. **Some common phrases:**

   with the accelerating pace of life

   with the development of science and technology

   with economic globalisation

   environmentally friendly devices

Useful Words and Expressions

advanced	innovative
automation	IT industry
beneficial	online
computer	out of date
computer virus	photocopier
download	science and technology
e-commerce; e-business	server
educational	technological revolution
electronic technology	to connect
e-mail/email	to disconnect
fax machine	to go online
hacker	to surf the Internet
home page	user-friendly
influential	website
information age	word processing
information superhighway	

Day 5 Part 1 – Common Topics (3)

XI. Hobbies and Interests

Hobbies and interests are essential and indispensable parts in human life. People have different hobbies or interests. The questions are, therefore, very varied and sometimes unpredictable. You should thus be well prepared to be able to achieve your desired result.

Let's now talk about hobbies and interests.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- Can you tell me something about your leisure activities?
- Do you have any hobbies? What are they? (What is / are your favourite hobby / hobbies? / What is your favourite pastime / entertainment?)

  - Yes, I do have some hobbies. I am interested in making model planes, collecting stamps and cycling in the countryside.
  - Stamp collecting is my favourite hobby because I like travelling very much. Through collecting stamps, I can see different cultures and scenery of different countries.
  - I have many hobbies. I like ... and ... Among them, my favourite one is ...
  - I'm sorry to tell you the truth that I don't have time for my hobbies. If any, maybe learning English.

- Is that what you mainly do at weekends?

  - Not really. At weekends, I often invite my friends to my place and I enjoy cooking for them. I'm a good cook compared to the others in the circle of my friends. Sometimes, we'll go camping together in the mountains. There are some beautiful mountains near my home town, perfect for camping. We would climb up to the top of the mountain, go picnicking, and things like this to relax. Well, sometimes it is not very relaxing as we're in the habit of discussing and arguing about some current affairs or some heated issues.

- How do you spend your spare time / weekends / holidays? / What do you usually do after work?
- What do you do for fun? / Do you have any hobbies? What are they?
- How do you like to relax? / What do you do in your spare time?

- I usually do some reading after work. When I feel tired, I will watch TV or go to the cinema.
- During weekends, I'd like to go to the country to visit my cousins who have a house there.
- On weekends, I often get together with my friends for eating out or playing sports. I also invite my friends to my home for a meal.
- I prefer to relax by having some leisure activities with my friends, such as fishing, swimming, or playing tennis.
- I like to stay at home reading some classical novels to relax.
- Generally, I like to stay with my parents on weekends. I like to collect stamps as well, and often swap my stamps with my friends.
- I enjoy gardening. So, if I'm not working, I sometimes go to the market to find the plants I like for my garden.
- In the evening, I sometimes go window-shopping with my girlfriend, or go to the cinema to see a good film.

• Do you like indoor or outdoor activities?

- I like outdoor activities a lot, for I have to work in the office during the weekdays. When I have free time, I love to go out to enjoy the nature.
- It depends. When the weather is fine, I'd like to have outdoor activities, but if the weather is awful, indoor activities like computer games or chess will be more exciting.

• What free-time activities are more popular with young people in Vietnam?

- Well, in Vietnam, people do many different things. For example, some people raise pets, build model ships, weave baskets, or carve soap figures. Others watch birds, climb mountains, raise flowers, fish, skate, ski, and swim. Also painting pictures, attending concerts and plays, and playing musical instruments are popular. Some people are fond of collecting everything from books to butterflies, and from shells to stamps.

• Do you like reading? What types of books do you usually read?
• What can you benefit/learn from reading?

- To be frank, I enjoy reading classical novels, books written by Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, etc. These books are usually thought-provoking and always set me thinking about my life and studying the people around me. Sometimes, I'm amazed at how

these authors could get the insight into human mentality. I also like reading biographies of some successful people and see how these people succeeded against all odds.

- Yes, I like reading in order to be well informed. So, I often read the journals or reference books or periodicals so that I can keep up with the latest development in my field.

- What kind of TV programmes do you most enjoy / dislike? / What is your favourite programme?
- Which channel / What programmes do you like best?

- The programme I like best is Legal Report which is on at 9:00 p.m. on HTV9. This programme always introduces some cases about civil law and carries out some discussion between the presenter, who is a law major himself, and some experts. It's very informative and instructive.
- Well, I don't like TV serials because the plots are too slow, and most of these programmes are not related to our lives and are quite superficial. The actors are quite pretentious with poor acting. Anyway, I don't have much time for TV, but I do watch evening news.

- Do you like listening to music? What kind of music do you prefer? / What type of music do you like best? Why?
- Is there anything you don't like about music?

- Yes, I do. I prefer pop music because it is easy to understand and close to people's lives. That's why so many young people love it. Meanwhile, by listening to pop music, I can keep up with the time.
- Well, I just can't very well say what type of music I like best because I just need to relax by listening to my walkman. I can improve my English while listening to English songs.
- Theoretically speaking, music is roughly divided into two types: music which stimulates people and music which calms us. It seems that music which stimulates us gives rise to actual changes in our bodies. If we listen to exciting music, our hearts beat faster, our blood pressure rises, and our blood flows more quickly. So, when I'm worried, I'll listen to calming music. In this way, my heart beats more gently, my blood pressure drops, and I feel calm. The smooth flowing melodies help me relax.
- Sometimes, it's very interesting to see what people of different cultures hear and feel when they listen to music.
- Classical music has so much more depth and meaning. But unfortunately, I should say I can't quite understand it.

- **Where can you go in Vietnam to listen to live music?**
  - I think you need to go to the concert hall or theatre to enjoy the high-quality music performance. But of course, you can go to some entertainment places such as bars or even restaurants to get some live music though I don't take it as music in its real sense, just some noise. Also, free outdoor public concerts are held during the summer months in many universities.

- **Is it good for a child to learn to play a musical instrument?**
  - Yes, definitely. If one learns a musical instrument, one can enjoy his or her life better. When playing the instrument, one seems to enter another world, forgetting about all the worries, sufferings, or frustrations. I believe a person who knows how to play an instrument perceives the world differently.

- **What hobby would you like to take up in the future? Why?**
  - Well, if I had the time, I'd like to take up music composition. I know it's not easy for me. It takes imagination and artistry to write even a short piece of music.

Suggestions

- In response to questions related to this topic, you mostly use the present simple tense.
- Prepare yourself with necessary lexis and ideas to talk about some activities below:

  Music
  Dance
  Collecting
  Fine arts
  Handicraft making
  Reading
  Watching TV
  Seeing a film
  Travelling
  Gardening
  Sports

• Below are suggested expressions and sentences concerning this subject area:

1. Nouns to mention this subject include hobby, free/spare-time activity, leisure activity, pastime, entertainment, etc.

   You see, hobbies can help a person's mental and physical health. I take up hobbies because these activities offer me enjoyment, friendship, knowledge, and relaxation.

   Nowadays in Vietnam, machines and automation have reduced the amount of time people spend on their jobs, so they can spare more time for hobbies. Hobbies provide variety for workers who do the same monotonous tasks all day long. Those who have developed hobbies never need to worry about what to do when they retire.

   I'm a busy person, but leisure activities could help me relax after periods of hard work, and provide a balance between work and play.

   My favourite hobby is ...

2. The following verbs and expressions may be of use:

   a. to like (doing) something

      I like playing golf, but I'm not good at it.

      My favourite music is classical music, but I also like listening to some pop songs so as to keep up to date.

   b. to enjoy (doing) something

      I enjoy stamp and coin collecting. Actually, I've collected some very rare coins. I also enjoy collecting antiques. I travel around Vietnam to hunt for unusual items from ancient times.

   c. to prefer to do something; prefer (doing) something to (doing) something

      My father doesn't go for gardening. He prefers to do something more active.

   d. to be interested in; to take / have an interest in; to take pleasure in; to be fond of; to be crazy about; to be keen on

      Young people nowadays are more interested in pop music than classical music.

      All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. So, I've taken up gardening recently. But my father has a keen interest in keeping birds.

      I'm not keen on violence. I'd rather see "Titanic", a romance.

   e. Other expressions:

      I'm not much for stamp collecting; rare coin collection appeals to me more.

      I'm more attracted to reading.

      I usually watch the early evening news before going to my study to work on my computer. Reading detective stories is one of my favourite pastimes. I don't fancy doing anything on weekends, just sitting down and relaxing.

Useful Words and Expressions

bassoon	pop music
blues	pop song
calligraphy	rafting
classical music	rare coin collection
concert hall	record collecting
concert tour	saxophone
country music	symphony
electronic music	symphony orchestra
folk song / music	to be carefree and contended
guitar	to collect stamps; stamp collection
heavy metal band	to go camping
hiking	to go fishing
horseback riding	to go hunting
jazz band	to go outing
jogging	to indulge in
light music	to keep pet birds/cats/dogs
light music band	to play cards/bridge/poker
mountain climbing	to play chess/go
music festival	to take pleasure in
musical instruments	traditional Vietnamese painting
musician	violin
piano	watercolour painting
picnic	Western instrument
pop concert	wind music

Exercise

Use the following sentence structures to practise talking about your likes and dislikes.

I'm not much for ... appeals to me more.

I don't go for ... I prefer to ...

What I like most about ... is that ...

I'm interested in / fond of / keen on ...

I'm more into things like ...

I'm not keen on ... because ... I'd rather ...

I don't like ... because it's too ... I prefer ...

I like ... best because ...

I enjoy + V-ing ...

- You see, football enjoys great popularity here, especially among young people.
- The Vietnamese Men's Football Team failed many times in their efforts to take part in the World Cup Football Competition, which broke the hearts of millions of football fans.

• How important are sports in your life?

- Sports play a very important role in my life. I used to be very weak, unable to handle my work efficiently due to lack of physical exercise. But now, I feel so energetic and healthy just because I took up jogging and bodybuilding a few years ago.

• What are the common ways for the Vietnamese people to keep fit?

- Usually, they keep healthy by keeping a balanced diet, taking regular exercises, and improving their psychological well-being.

• What are the sports facilities like in this city?

- I think we have a lot of sports facilities nowadays but they are far from enough. The sports stadiums, gyms or swimming pools, usually located in universities, are open to the students only, and they charge a lot for admission if the public want to use them. So, I think there should be some facilities in the communities for people to use free of charge.
- I think the sports facilities can meet the needs of the public. You see, we have basketball courts and football fields everywhere.

Suggestions

• In response to questions raised in this part, you need to talk about the kind of sport you actually perform and your opinion on the benefits of sports on health.

• Provide yourself with sufficient lexis and ideas to discuss the areas below:

Sports facilities

Different preference of the old, young, men and women

Sports and health

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International games and international friendship
The 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing
Attitudes towards sports
Future sports

• The previously-learnt verbs and expressions may be used as well as the following verb phrases:

1. to be engaged in (doing) something; to go in for; to take up
   Which event is he **going in for** in the Olympics?
   I think I'll **take up** tennis next spring and give up golf.

2. to participate in; to take part in; to join in
   We are going to **participate in** this sports meet.

3. to be good at
   I'm not very **good at** swimming, but participation is what really counts.

4. to win/beat/defeat; to lose/be defeated; to break/hold the record; to score a point/goal
   Our team **won / lost** by three goals/points.
   Our host team **beat** the guest team 4-2 yesterday.
   The sports star **broke the** Olympic **record** last year.
   He **holds the record** for the 100-metre breaststroke.
   This team has never **been defeated.**
   How many goals / points has he scored this season?

Useful Words and Expressions

archery	closing ceremony
badminton	cricket
baseball	cross-country race
basketball	decathlon
basketball court	fencing
billiards	field events
bodybuilding	figure skating
bowling	final
boxing	football field
cards	football/soccer
champion	gold/silver/bronze medal
chess	gymnastics

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heptathlon	swimming pool
high jump	table tennis
hockey	tennis
horse riding	tennis court
hurdles/hurdle crossing	the Asian Games
international game	the Olympic Games
long-distance race	throwing the javelin
long jump	to be in good form/shape/health
marathon	to cheer for the Vietnamese team
mountain climbing	to do morning exercise
100-metre sprint	to keep fit/healthy
opening ceremony	to lose weight
parachute jumping	to play Chinese chess
pentathlon	to play sports
pole vaulting	to popularise a sport among people
quarter-final	to put on weight
relay race	to put the shot; the shot-put
roller skating	to throw the discus; discus throwing
semi-final	track and field events
skating	track events
skiing	traditional Vietnamese martial arts
softball	triathlon
sports activities	water sports
sports field/stadium	weightlifting
sportsmanship	winter sports
surfing	

XIII. Holidays and Festivals

Holidays and festivals are closely related to each other. Concerning this subject area, you may be expected to talk about festivals in your country. Typically, what the most important festival is in your country, how people usually celebrate a certain festival, what special foods or activities are associated with this festival, or whether or not festivals are important for a society, etc.

Let's now talk about holidays and festivals.

Some sample questions and possible answers are on the next page.

- What is the most popular holiday in Vietnam?
- Can you describe one of the popular festivals and holidays in Vietnam?
- What is the most important traditional festival in your country?

◦ I think the most important one is the Tet Holiday, which is very much like Christmas in the Western countries. It is on the first of January according to the lunar calendar. It is a time when friends and family members get together. And we have about ten days off.

- Can you tell me something about the festivals in Vietnam? Which is your favourite holiday?

◦ Yes. We have many traditional festivals, but the major ones are, for example, the Tet Holiday, the Moon Festival, May Day, and the National Day. My favourite festival is the Tet Holiday, the Vietnamese New Year. It comes on the first of January according to the lunar calendar. On New Year's Eve, children will get "lucky money" and wear new clothes. They can do things they would not normally be allowed to do.

◦ The Tet Holiday is always my favourite holiday because there are so many activities and varieties of food. Like Christmas in the Western countries, it's the most important and longest holiday we have, a good time for family reunion and relaxation. We celebrate this holiday with a lot of different activities: having a big feast, visiting our parents and friends to express our goodwill, enjoying the flower festival, watching lion dancing or chatting with each other.

- What do you do during the Tet Holiday?

◦ On the Tet Holiday, we have about ten days off. I often visit my parents, friends, and relatives. It's a great time to relax and enjoy ourselves. But many people take the opportunity to visit the places of interest in and outside Vietnam.

- How do you celebrate an important occasion in your family, such as a wedding or a birthday?

◦ We celebrate important occasions in my family by getting together with our parents, having a big meal and playing some games afterwards.

- **What do you usually do on holidays?**
  - We celebrate our National Day with a lot of activities: playing the national anthem, watching military parade and enjoying fireworks display, or going out on a tour to some exotic places.
  - On New Year's Eve, after dinner, children usually receive some "lucky money", wear new clothes and get new toys, while adults usually watch the TV gala or play some games. Later at night, when the clock strikes 12, with the coming of the New Year, people will enjoy fireworks display.
  - We usually make square cakes, a typical food on New Year's Day in Vietnam. It is a kind of glutinous rice cake wrapped in banana leaves, in order to honour our ancestor, King Hung, who himself made it to present his respected father.

- **What holiday or festival has become more popular in Vietnam recently?**
  - I think Christmas and Valentine's Day have become very popular in Vietnam. Well, I'd say they're more commercialised because long before these holidays approach, businessmen have made every effort to attract more customers. Anyway, everyone wants to take this opportunity to enjoy themselves, nothing to do with religion.

- **What do you think about the impact of Western cultures on the Vietnamese traditional culture?**
  - Well, it's true that some Western festivals have been accepted by the Vietnamese, but as the Western culture is emerging into the culture, there's also very strong influence of the Vietnamese on the Western. With the economic globalisation, you can certainly feel the multiculture.
  - I think there's a lot of impact, because you can feel there is a stronger holiday atmosphere in the air than the traditional Vietnamese festivals.

Suggestions

- Talking about festivals, you almost always use the present tenses.

- In the sample answers above, typical festivals of Vietnam are introduced, but you need to think of other Vietnamese festivals in order to meet the examiner's expectation. Invest proper time and effort on the following:

Statutory and informal holidays / festivals

Origin and meaning
Where to spend holidays
How to spend holidays
Attitude to holidays
Influence of Western holidays

- Useful verbs or verb phrases:

1. **spend** *vt.*

   Where did you **spend** your Tet Holiday last year?

   Now, more and more people **spend** their leisure time trying to acquire more skills.

2. **take** *vt.*

   It **took** the workers two years to build this suspension bridge.

   It will **take** you a long time to get used to the weather here.

3. **origin** *n.* **originate** *vi.*

   The **origins** of this custom are unknown.

   The festival **originated** from the Tran Dynasty.

4. **celebrate** *vt.*

   How do you **celebrate** important occasions such as weddings or birthdays in your family?

5. **to date back to/from** *phr v.*

   The custom **dates back to** the 16th century.

Useful Words and Expressions

annual holiday	statutory holiday
Children's Day	the Dragon Boat Festival
festival	the Lantern Festival
holiday	the Moon/Mid-Autumn Festival
holiday economy	the Tet Holiday
informal holiday	to celebrate
lunar calendar	to commemorate
May Day	to take/have 3 days off
National Day	vacation
New Year's Day	Women's Day
public holiday	

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Exercise

Practise asking and answering questions on holidays and festivals. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

Do the young people in Vietnam spend holidays in the same way as the old? How do people generally spend their holidays in Vietnam?

Where do most people go for their holidays?

Do you think people have enough holidays? Why / Why not?

Can you describe one of the main festivals celebrated in your country? Will this change greatly in the future? How?

What is the best way to spend holidays?

What is the biggest traditional festival in your country?

What do you usually do during the Tet Holiday?

Do people in Vietnam have the same number of holidays?

What are the advantages / is the importance for people to take holidays?

XIV. Entertainment

Entertainment is a topic which is similar to the above-mentioned ones. As you will see below, the questions may focus on your favourite form of entertainment, or your prediction of possible forms of entertainment in the future, etc.

Let's now talk about entertainment.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- **Can you tell me what kind of entertainment you like best?**
  - The kind of entertainment I like most is classical concert.

- **What are the entertainment facilities like in your city? / Can you tell me something about the entertainment facilities in your city?**
  - There are all kinds of entertainment facilities in this city, cinemas, theatres, circuses, pubs, bars, discos, even night clubs. Many people also go to ballrooms with karaoke facilities to dance or sing the songs they like.
  - The entertainment facilities in this city have improved a lot. We can go to the cinema, the theatre, circus or different kinds of bars.

- **What is the most popular entertainment for young people in your country?**

○ Well, I think the most popular entertainment for the young is going online, surfing the Internet. Everywhere you go, you can see numerous net bars, cheap and convenient. They surf on the Internet for information, chat with their friends or receive and send e-mails to friends far away. Sometimes, they just play computer games.

- **What do you think would be the most popular entertainment 20 years from now?**
- **What do you think would be the most favourable entertainment for the Vietnamese people in 20 years' time?**

○ Well, it's hard to say. You see, in the future, people will have a more competitive world, so they will suffer from more psychological pressure. So, I guess theme bars would be very popular, I mean the kind of bars where people can go and relieve their pressure and stress.

Suggestions

- The following should be brought into focus:

Entertainment places
Favourite forms of entertainment
Entertainment facilities
Public and private entertainment
Comparison of entertainment in the past, present, and future

Useful Words and Expressions

acrobatics	concert
acting	costume
action movie	detective story
advertisement	director
cable TV station	disco
cartoon	documentary
cinema	drama
circus	entertainment; recreation
classical/modern ballet	game show
comedian	home/international news
comedy	horror film
commercial programme	interviewee

interviewer	porno film
lighting	science fiction
love story	setting
merry-go-round	soap opera
modern dance	talk show
music	television network
news headlines	television viewer
night club	to be televised live
opera	to go boating
Oscar Award	to see a film/movie; to go to the cinema
performance	tragedian
photography	tragedy
pleasure boat	TV programme
plot (slow, simple, complicated, stimulating, inspiring, moving, touching, thought-provoking)	TV serial
	Vietnamese Opera
	Western/cowboy movie

- She won the Oscar for best actress for her excellent performance in the film. I bet it'll become a box office hit.
- The World Cup Football Final will be televised live on Channel 5 next Saturday.
- The great part about some cable networks is that there are no commercial interruptions.
- The prime time of most channels is occupied by TV serials.
- The make-up in Vietnamese Opera has special meaning. Each colour has a very precise meaning. For example, red indicates that the person is brave, loyal and virtuous; black indicates a fierce and crude nature; blue signifies cruelty; a completely white face denotes a traitor, while a dab of white is worn by a crown.

Exercises

1. **Use the following sentence patterns to answer the questions below.**

As far as I'm concerned, the best ...
From my point of view, the best ...
I'd go for this one because ...
I'd much prefer that one because ...
This one is preferable because ...
I'd rather have that one because ...

Do you prefer drinking tea or coffee?
Would you rather visit Europe or America?
Do you prefer action or romantic films?

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Which would you rather do – read a novel or listen to music?

Do you like relaxing at the weekend or doing something active?

2. **Give detailed answers to the following questions.**

Can you describe home entertainment versus public entertainment?

What was the most popular entertainment 20 years ago in Vietnam?

How has entertainment changed in the last 20 years in Vietnam?

Do the old and the young have very different entertainment?

Will this change in the future? Why/Why not?

XV. Accommodation

Accommodation is one of the most common topics in the IELTS Speaking test. The questions centre upon your home, the kind of building you are living in, or the type of accommodation you hope to have, etc.

Let's now talk about accommodation.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- **Can you tell me where you live?/Can you describe your flat/house?**
- **Can you tell me something about your accommodation?**

  - I've got a nice house with a total area of 240 square metres. In the house, downstairs, we have a kitchen, sitting room, dining room, bathroom and a hall; upstairs, we have five bedrooms, a bathroom, an office and a playroom.
  - I've got a big garden where I spend my weekends sometimes when I'm not very busy.
  - I don't have a house as I've just graduated from university. Actually, I've rent a flat with one of my friends in the city centre. It is a good-sized flat, just right for two to share, well furnished and gas heated.
  - My flat has two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a bathroom. I love my flat, small but cosy, as it is my home, a place where I can go back and relax after work.

- **How have housing conditions changed in recent few decades?**

  - The housing conditions have greatly been improved in Vietnam since the open-door policy. Many people who used to live in shabby houses have moved to high-rise buildings with modern facilities. Some people even have two places, one in the city, convenient enough for them to go to work, and the other in the peaceful and quiet

country, an appealing place for spending their weekends and holidays. But as far as I'm concerned, I'm not so fussy about shelter. I bought this house only last year after ten years in business. I used to live in a bungalow with my parents 20 years ago.

- Where do most of the Vietnamese people live, in the city or in the country?
- What kind of places do people in your country prefer to live in?

- Well, unlike your country, in Vietnam, many people prefer to live in the city because there are a lot of opportunities for entertainment, education, and employment.
- Some people in my city prefer to have two places to live in. One is a flat in the city where they can live during the weekdays while the other one is in the suburbs, where they can enjoy fresh air and relax in a quiet and peaceful environment at weekends.

Suggestions

• In response to questions given in this part, you most often employ the present and past tenses. Also, be ready to fluently talk about the following:

Accommodation
Equipment
Changes of housing conditions in Vietnam
Preference of the Vietnamese people for different types and areas of houses
Measures taken by the government to solve housing problems
Future development

• Be aware of the verbs below:

1. **live** *vi.*

We used to live in a bungalow, but now we live in a detached house in the suburbs.
Many people prefer to live in the country to be close to the nature.

2. **inhabit** *vt.* **inhabitant** *n.*

During the holiday, we visited an island **inhabited** only by birds.
It is necessary to consult the local **inhabitants** before you build an expressway here.

3. **house** *vt.*

People in this area are poorly **housed**.

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Useful Words and Expressions

air conditioner	in the city centre
balcony	in the suburbs
bathroom	interior/exterior decoration
bedroom	kitchen
bookcase	kitchen sink
central heating	real estate company
curtains	refrigerator; fridge
dining room	residential area
dining table	(semi-)detached house
dishwasher	shower
dormitory	sofa
facilities and appliances	student hostel
flat; apartment	studio
furniture	study
garage	to have a house done up; to decorate a house
garden	urban sprawl
good-sized room	vacuum cleaner
grass/lawn	villa
hall of residence	washing machine
heating system	well furnished

Exercise

Practise asking and answering questions on housing and accommodation. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

Do you live in a flat or a house? Can you describe it in detail?

Is your place a good area to live in? Why / Why not?

Describe the street you live in.

What kind of places do most people in Vietnam prefer to live in? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Do the young and the elderly have the same preference for living places?

How have living conditions changed in Vietnam? What do you think about these changes?

Why do some people want to have big living places?

Day 6 Part 1 – Common Topics (4)

XVI. Clothes

As far as this topic is concerned, such typical questions as the following are given: the type of clothes you like to wear, the kinds of clothes people in your country are usually dressed in, the importance of fashion to you, what factors you consider first before deciding to buy certain clothes, etc.

Let's now talk about clothes.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- What do you usually wear at work/school?
- What type of clothes do you wear after work/school?

  - I usually wear formal clothes as it is the job requirement. You see, I'm a businessman and I should be polite to my clients. As you know, people always associate an organisation with what the staff wear. Informal clothing will give them an impression that an organisation does not put enough care into what it does. However, we should be very careful not to look too formal. Otherwise, people would think that we are too cold or arrogant. It is important to keep a balance between the two extremes.
  - I hate these formal suits and uniforms, but we have to wear them at work. And they're believed to represent the image of the company.
  - We can wear what we want to after work, but there are some strict rules for what we should wear on the job.

- Can what people wear show their personality?

  - Yes, I think so. People's taste for clothes can show their personality to some extent, but it's not absolute. For example, the extroverts would like to wear something bright and follow the latest fashion, while the introvert and serious people would like to stick to rules and do not easily venture some changes, so they may like the traditional clothes with dark colours.

- How has clothing styles changed in Vietnam?

  - Well, I think there have been a lot of changes in clothing styles in Vietnam. If you want to find what the main trend of clothes is by just looking at what people wear, you'll be surprised because there are so many varieties. About seventy years ago, the most common

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- How has clothing styles changed in Vietnam?

  - Well, I think there have been a lot of changes in clothing styles in Vietnam. If you want to find what the main trend of clothes is by just looking at what people wear, you'll be surprised because there are so many varieties. About seventy years ago, the most common

clothes for men was a long dress, usually black, and white pants. The clothing for women was very similar to that of men with the colours of grey, black, and green. But now, we have different kinds of materials – silk, woollen, cotton, velvet, etc., and different colours. We can have any kind of style we can think of. People are encouraged to create their own unique styles.

- **Were there any rules or regulations about what you should wear at school?**

  - Yes. We were not allowed to wear any jewellery and different styles of clothes. I can clearly remember that when I first went to my secondary school, I had to wear a blue and white striped shirt. Then, in the second and third years, we were supposed to wear a navy jumper, and in the fourth and fifth years it was a burgundy jumper. It was a specially-designed school jumper with the school emblem on. And we had to wear a navy skirt.
  - There were even rules and regulations about what we should wear in our hair. We had to wear a certain kind of ribbon or hair ornament.

- **What's your favourite type of clothes?**
- **What do you consider first when you buy your clothes: price, quality, or style?**

  - Well, definitely, I prefer casual clothes. When I buy clothes, I always think about comfort first. So, I'd look at the material first and cotton is my favourite, then I'll check the quality. Sometimes, I may choose the style. But as style changes so fast, something out of style this year may be in style the next. I really don't want to follow trend.

Suggestions

- In response to questions raised, you simply talk about what you actually think, using appropriate vocabulary and tenses (present and past).

- The following may be thrown into focus:

  Daily clothing

  Holiday clothes

  Ethnic costumes

  Dressing requirement

  Clothes and personality

Changes in clothes

Preferences of people at different ages for styles

Development of fashion industry in Vietnam

- Bear in mind the lexical items and expressions below:

1. **wear** *vt.*

   Many women **wear** nighties in bed whereas most men and children **wear** pyjamas.

   People with ugly knees shouldn't **wear** shorts.

2. **to put on**

   She took off her shoes and **put on** her slippers.

3. **dress** *vt.* **to be dressed in** **dress up**

   She quickly **dressed** her child.

   I love **dressing up** for parties as I normally wear jeans.

   She is **dressed in** a sleeveless dress today.

4. **in + colour**

   Look at the man **in black**.

5. **Some expressions:**

   This outfit fits me very well.

   Does this tie go well with my shirt? Well, I don't think black suits me.

   The skirt is too tight and too short – it needs **letting out and letting down**.

   The dress is too loose and too long – it needs **taking in and taking up**.

   He **changed** out of his weekend clothes into his uniform.

   Those shoes don't fit the boy any more. He's **grown out of** them.

Useful Words and Expressions

blouse	high heels; high-heeled shoes
cardigan	jacket
casual clothes	jeans
checked clothes	knitted clothes
coat	leather shoes
designer coat	overall
evening dress	polyester
formal clothes	pullover
handmade clothes	ready-made clothes

sandals	sweater
silk	the latest fashion
silk scarf	tie
skirt	trousers
sports shoes	T-shirt
sportswear	underwear
striped clothes	uniform
style	Vietnamese-style clothes
suit	wool

Exercise

Practise asking and answering the following questions about clothes. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

Where do you usually buy your clothes? Why?

What are the most popular clothes in Vietnam?

Can you describe the traditional clothes / costume in Vietnam?

Should we fall slaves to fashion? Why / Why not?

Can designer coats reveal truly one's social status?

Should people be judged by what they wear? Why / Why not?

How have the Vietnamese people's attitudes towards clothes changed in the last two decades?

What do you think would be the trend in clothes 20 years from now?

Should students wear school uniforms? Why / Why not?

XVII. Food and Drink

Moving on to the subject of food and drink, you may be expected to talk about some of your favourite foods, what foods are popular in your country, some of the famous dishes of your country, the types of restaurants that local and foreign people frequently dine in, etc.

Let's now talk about food and drink.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- Can you tell me something about the food in your country?
- Can you describe your favourite food?

◦ Ah, yes. We're famous for our cooking. We have a lot of very spicy food which some foreigners find too hot, but the spices are essential for the flavours we like. We like meat a lot, but beans are also important in our dishes.

- Can you tell me something about Vietnamese food?

○ Well, there is no such simple thing as so-called "Vietnamese food". With a territory as large and a history as long and complex as Vietnam's, it is inevitable that distinct regional differences in cuisine have evolved over the centuries.

○ It is generally accepted that we have three principal culinary regions: Northern, Central and Southern, with Western most commonly listed as a fourth. But these designations are not hard and fast geographical boundaries.

○ Well, the mainstream culinary traditions in all three regions of Vietnam share some fundamental features. First, freshness of food: Most meats are only briefly cooked to preserve their original textures and colours. Second, presence of herbs and vegetables: Herbs and vegetables are used abundantly in Vietnamese cuisines. Vietnamese dishes are incomplete without herbs and vegetables. Third, broths or soup-based dishes are characteristic of all three regions. Last, presentation: The condiments that accompany Vietnamese meals are usually colourful and arranged in eye-pleasing manners.

- What is people's favourite food in your region?
- Why do they like this type of food?

○ Definitely, the sour soup called *canh chua* is often cooked in hot pot style (called *lau canh chua*). People in the south like hot and spicy food a lot, but our foreign visitors often find it too hot to enjoy. They can make very nice hotpot with limitless ingredients.

○ One of the major reasons for the popularity of this type of food may be the weather. It is very different from here. In summer, it can be very humid and according to the traditional Vietnamese medicine, humidity can be very harmful to the health, so people there usually eat very hot food with a lot of chilies and black pepper to get rid of the humidity in the body. Another reason may be that hot food can be very appetising.

- What kind of restaurants do you like going to?
- Describe a restaurant that you often go to.

○ Well, I like to go to restaurants that are informal and relaxing but offer varieties of food and good service, anyway good value for money. Sometimes, I also take my clients to the formal and luxurious restaurants. But I often feel uneasy with so many waitresses or waiters offering you extremely good service, and trying to please you. Meanwhile, the dishes are too expensive and I think that's a waste of money.

○ I often go to the Pearl Restaurant, a Chinese restaurant near my university. It's a well-known restaurant in this area for the authentic Sichuan food they offer to the

customers. Their house special dishes such as twice-cooked fish and diced rabbit with green pepper are so tasty that all the customers would like to order them. As a matter of fact, they have a special dish or soup every day. Apart from the quality of the food, the service is also good, the waiters and waitresses are well trained, efficient, patient, and polite. As a regular customer, I also get discount on the dishes.

Suggestions

• Be ready to express yourself on the typical issues mentioned above as well as some others, for instance, whether or not cooking is always a woman's job, or how you like foreign food, etc.

• Just give answers according to what you actually know and understand.

• Be careful to use the following terms correctly:

1. **eat** *vi.*

   He was too ill to eat.

   We are just too busy to cook, so we often eat out.

   The river ate the bank away.

   Acid can eat into metal.

2. **have** *vt.*

   I usually have cereal such as cornflakes for my breakfast.

3. **consume** *vt.* **consumption** *n.* **consumer** *n.*

   This kind of motorbike consumes more petrol than the others.

   The meat was declared unfit for human consumption.

   You can complain to the Consumers' Association.

4. **digest** *vi., vt.* **indigestion** *n.*

   The food is too greasy to digest.

   I cannot digest milk products easily.

   The little boy is suffering from indigestion.

• Some ideas for reference:

Vitamins can be lost as a result of cooking. A regular daily intake of vitamins is necessary.

A standard banquet will consist of four to eight prepared cold dishes, eight hot dishes served one at a time, two to four large showpiece dishes, in addition to soups, steamed rice and pastries. The dinner finishes up with fruit.

"Vô" means to raise up one's wine glass or liquor cup and drink it all the way down so that the glass or cup is dried up to the last drop. People finish their glasses to communicate the message to others that they are sincere and joyful.

We judge Vietnamese cooking by the three essential factors, or key elements, "colour, aroma, and taste". The "colour" of Vietnamese food, the first of the three, includes the layout and design of dishes, best exemplified in particular by the large elaborately-prepared cold dishes served at the beginning of the dinner. "Aroma" means what we can smell from the dishes. And it implies more than what one's nose can detect directly; it also includes the freshness of the raw materials used and the blending of seasonings. "Taste" is the art of proper seasoning, though it also involves the texture of food and fine slicing techniques.

Well, the three essential elements have to work together to make a good dish. And colour, aroma, and taste can only be achieved by the careful coordination of a series of delicate activities: selecting ingredients, mixing flavours, timing the cooking, controlling the heat and finally, laying out the food on the plate for the table.

The nearly endless variety of natural ingredients and methods of preparation employed in Vietnamese cuisine stand out unequalled in the world.

Vietnam's long history, vast territory and extensive contact with other nations and cultures have given birth to the distinctive Vietnamese culinary art.

A Vietnamese dinner begins with cold dishes, and a Western dinner with soup.

Useful Words and Expressions

alcoholic drink
baking
beef curry
beer
black coffee
black tea
boiling
buffet
carbohydrates
champagne
Coca-Cola
cocktail
cold dish
colour, aroma, and taste
crispy duck
cuisine
deep-frying
dessert
diced pork with peanuts
dietary habit
double-cooked pork
dry red wine
dry white wine
dumplings
ethnic food
fast food
fish-flavoured eggplant
food rich in calorie
French fries
fried rice
fruit juice
green tea

hamburger	salad dressing
health food	sandwich
hotpot	scrambled eggs with tomatoes
ingredient	7-up
instant coffee	shredded beef with green pepper
instant noodles	shredding
instantly boiled mutton in a Mongolian hotpot	slicing
jasmine tea	smoking
Kentucky Fried Chicken	soft drink/beverage
lemonade	spring onion and ginger
liquor; spirit	spring roll
McDonald's	Sprite
mineral water	staple food
MSG (mono-sodium glutamate); gourmet seasoning powder	steaming
noodles	stir-frying
nourishing/nutritious food	sweet-and-sour pork
orange juice	the art of proper seasonings
pan-frying	the blending of seasonings
Pepsi-Cola	to go/be on a diet
pickling	to grind
pizza	toast
plain rice	vanilla ice-cream
protein	vegetarian food
quick-frying	vitamins
raw materials	whisky
	white coffee
	yogurt

Exercise

Practise asking and answering the following questions on food. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

What kind of food do you like most? Why do you like this food so much?

Is there any food you don't like? Why?

What is the healthy food? Why?

Do you like to change your eating habits? Why / Why not?

Tell me about a special food in your area. How is it different from other cuisines in Vietnam?

What food is more popular with young people in your city?

Please describe the typical foods in Vietnam.

How has the diet habit in Vietnam changed in the past few years?

XVIII. The Press and Media

The press and media comprise a wide range of areas such as newspapers, magazines, television, the Internet, etc. Some advantages or disadvantages of one of these may be discussed; and more likely, you may be asked to talk about the possible trends of one of these means of communication.

Let's now talk about the press and media.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- Where do the Vietnamese people often get their news from?
- Where do you often get your news from?

◦ There are three main ways people in Vietnam get their news from: television, newspapers and the Internet. Personally, I get my news by watching news via satellite.

- What is your favourite magazine or journal?
- What's your favourite newspaper / magazine? Which section do you read most?

◦ What I like most is "Teaching English in Vietnam", a magazine about English teaching in Vietnam. It is very popular with English teachers as it can keep them well informed about what is happening in their field. There are so many good ideas, suggestions and theories in every issue about English teaching in Vietnam. Its editors are usually native speakers while the contributors are teachers of English in Vietnam. There are several sections in it, for example, "Second Language Acquisition", "ELT Technology", "Testing", "ELT Methodology", "Teacher Development", "Classroom Management and Resources". The part I like most is "ELT Methodology", in which I can find the latest approaches to English teaching.

- What products are advertised a lot on newspapers / magazines?

◦ Well, there are all kinds of classified ads, from second-hand furniture to computers, automobiles, etc. The most frequently-run and well-read ads are for language training courses.

○ The third section, "Business", is a section that is amazingly well read. In the "Classified Advertising" section – classified advertisements being specialist small advertisements, quite often tiny ads – we have ads for houses, ads for jobs and so on.

• How can we protect ourselves from getting some false or misleading information?

○ The best way is to get your information from reliable sources, for example, TV, radio, etc. I don't believe in grapevine news. I like to get information from the mass media, Here in Vietnam, we're kept well informed about what's going on in the world.

• Which is more reliable as a source of information: newspaper, TV, radio or the Internet? Why?

○ I still think the traditional media is more reliable, though the Internet or the modern media has the advantage of high speed, large volume, and easy access. Anyone with good computer skills can use the media to give the information in their favour or they believe to be true.

○ Well, I believe the Internet is more reliable, because there are very strict restrictions or censorship on the traditional media, so you get good news most of the time and not enough objective reports of what is going on.

Suggestions

• Just give answers according to what you actually know and understand.

• Prepare yourself for appropriate vocabulary and structures to give comments and evaluation on the following areas:

Major newspapers, magazines and books

Favourite newspapers, magazines and books

Where and how to get information

Reading habit

Opinions on media development

Future development

• Try to include the terms below in your answers:

1. **read** *vi., vt.* **reader** *n.*

I like reading about current affairs, and I like reading art reviews and book reviews.

This magazine has a wide circulation in this country. It has readers of different ages.

2. **censor** *vt.* **censorship** *n.*
   control *vt., n.* **restriction** *n.*

   They cut / censored the serial before showing it on TV.

   The government should have strict control on the films for children.

3. **issue** *vt., n.*

   This set of stamps was issued in Mar., 2002.

   I'd like to borrow the latest issue of ELT Journal.

   Human cloning is a controversial issue in the world.

4. **periodical** *n.* **journal** *n.* **magazine** *n.*

   He often reads journals to keep himself well informed of the latest development in his field.

   Vogue is a popular magazine.

- Some expressions / ideas for reference:

Many people get their news by reading the information on the Internet. Actually, you can find most of the news there. I think that's the best place to find what's going on domestically and internationally.

TV has one advantage: you can both see and hear.

I don't have time to watch much TV. I watch TV only for the news.

We have some magazines and newspapers published in English in Vietnam, for instance, *Sai Gon Giai Phong, Saigon Times, Vietnam Investment Reviews,* and *Teaching English in Vietnam.*

The article was written by a top political correspondent. I'm also interested in reading the editorial. I don't always agree with the stand taken in the editorial, but I still read it carefully.

Useful Words and Expressions

circulation	entertainment section
columnist	foreign correspondent
correspondent; journalist	front page
cover page	headline news
current affairs	headlines
editorial	home news

international news	scandal
learned/academic journal	scoop/exclusive news
magazine	sensational stories
news briefing	staff correspondent
periodical	to subscribe to a newspaper/magazine
press/news conference	well-informed sources
reader	

Exercise

Practise asking and answering the following questions on the mass media. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

What do you usually like reading in your spare time?

Can you tell me the book/story you like to read most?

Can you tell me something about the reading habit of the Vietnamese people?

Is TV/radio/newspaper/the Internet a reliable source of information?

Now there are many electronic reading materials. They are more dramatic than books. Do you like to read them? Will they replace printed materials like newspapers or books?

How can a book become a best-seller?

Should there be more restrictions on publications? Why/ Why not?

XIX. Future Plans and Ambitions

Future plans, dreams and ambitions are the subjects you should invest a lot of time and effort in; or else you may end up running out of ideas for the talk. You should be able to amply talk about your short- and long-term plans or your dreams or ambitions for the future.

Let's now talk about future plans and ambitions.

Below are some sample questions and possible answers.

- **What's your ambition?**
  - I've always been obsessed with creative writing, and I'd love to become a famous writer of several best-sellers.
  - I have always wanted to be a tourist guide working for a big travel agency, because it seems like such a fascinating profession, travelling around the world and seeing many of the world's famous places.
  - I'm career-minded, and have always wanted to become a manager of a big real estate company.

- What if you can't achieve your ambition?
  - Well, if I can't achieve this ambition, it just means that I'm not made for it. Then, I'll settle for a well-paid job in Ho Chi Minh City.
  - If I can't achieve this ambition, I'll settle for a well-paid job.

- Why do you want to do this? And how long have you wanted to do this?
  - If I pass this IELTS test, I'll apply to a British university for a doctoral degree, because a doctoral degree is very important for my future development.
  - After that, I'd like to find a job in a multinational company in Ha Noi.
  - I've always been (dis)satisfied with my job.

- What do you intend to do after you finish studying?
  - I hope to get a job working in a multinational company where I can use my knowledge of the Vietnamese market and my expertise of computer science.

- Do you think there'll be any change in your job when you return from abroad?
  - Yes, absolutely. You see, I'm going to study an MBA course in Britain, specialising in human resources management. I think when I come back to Vietnam, I'll be promoted to a better position with better pay. I'll take up some challenging job with more responsibility. And of course, I can do better. However, I don't think I will go to work in another company, because I'm very happy with my present company.
  - Yes, definitely. I'm not very happy with the present company, the poor work environment, complicated personal relationship and the boss. I've longed for a change. And it's the main reason for my going abroad to study.

- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
  - Well, in five years' time, I would be working in a multinational or a foreign company in Ho Chi Minh City. You see, I have my parents and friends in Ho Chi Minh City and I also like the Vietnamese culture, so definitely, I'll come back to Vietnam after I finish my study in Britain. I choose to work in a foreign company just because I like the atmosphere there, without much office politics but with better pay.

- What do you hope to do after graduation?
- What do you intend to do after you complete your Master's degree?
- What are your immediate/short-term/long-term plans?

- I'll enrol in an elementary computing course, learning some basic hands-on experience.
- I'm going to visit my friend in Australia next year.
- What I'd like to do is to set up my own travel agent, and travel around the world on business.
- I'd like to study for an MBA in Britain, specialising in human resources management.

Suggestions

- Just give answers according to what you actually think of.
- Use the future tenses accurately.
- Familiarise yourself with the following expressions:

I'm planning to ...	I've decided to ...
I hope to ...	I'm thinking of + V-ing ...
I want to ...	If I can't ..., I'll probably ...

Useful Words and Expressions

ambition	long-term plan
ambitious	plan
future	short-term plan
hope	to be career-minded
immediate plan	to be content with
in the immediate/near future	to be dissatisfied with
in the remote/far/distant future	to be obsessed with
intention	wealthy

Exercise

Practise asking and answering questions on future plans and ambitions. See whether your answers are detailed or precise enough.

What are you going to study abroad? What exactly do you plan to study?

How will your study abroad benefit your work in Vietnam when you come back?

Are you going to study more theory or more practice? Give your reasons.

What are your main aims in going abroad?

Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?
What changes do you think there will be in Vietnam in the next 10/20 years?
What do you think of the future of Vietnam if Vietnam keeps an open policy?
Do you think you will fulfil your ambition one day? How do you fulfil your ambition?
Apart from pollution, what other problems do you foresee in the future?
In general, what do you think about the growth of cities in Vietnam?
How does this (topic) affect everyday life?

Day 7 The IELTS Speaking Test – Part 2

I. An Overview

Part 2 is the Individual Long Turn which lasts between 3 and 4 minutes (including 1 minute's preparation time). The examiner gives the candidate a card with a subject and a few guiding questions on it. The candidate must speak about that subject (he / she cannot ask for another) without interruption for between 1 and 2 minutes.

The examiner decides on the exact length. The candidate has an optional 1 minute so as to prepare for his / her talk. Also, he / she is provided with some paper and a pencil to make some brief notes. Using the points on the cue card effectively coupled with making notes during the preparation time will enable the candidate to think of appropriate things to say, structure the talk, and keep talking for 2 minutes. After the candidate's monologue, the examiner will ask 1 or 2 brief questions in order to finish off this section.

II. Common Topics

In this part of the test, you have to answer questions on themes of general interest. Generally, the topics in this part can be divided into several major categories such as people, places, objects, habits and likes (present tense questions), plans (future tense questions), experiences (past tense / present perfect tense questions), etc.

III. Reminders

The questions in the second part are not complicated but are more demanding than the ones that you did in Part 1. You are asked to make a presentation on a topic. Next, the examiner will have a set of questions to ask you. How many questions he / she asks depends on how long you talk for in your answer. Preparation and practice for Part 2 are similar to those in Part 1.

Memorise the following reminders so that you can do well.

1. Use the card that the examiner gives you. You cannot ask him / her for another one.
2. Make use of 1 minute's preparation for appropriate language and idea organisation.
3. Note that some questions ask you to use present, future, or past tenses. You, therefore, have to employ tenses correctly.
4. Speak for long enough. You have to talk uninterrupted for 1 to 2 minutes in English. So, draw on your own experience to complete the talk.
5. Keep talking until the examiner interrupts you or goes to the next question.

6. Start your talk, applying the guides below:
   - Each point is discussed in turn.
   - There are pauses between each section.
   - Signpost language should be used to help the examiner to understand the main points you are making, and also a new point is being introduced.
7. Use the cue card as the structure of your talk and stay coherent. All the cue cards are organised in the same way with one major topic and 4 sub-topics. You always know what you are going to say next, and these sub-topics allow you to pause in the right places. You can apply these suggestions:
   - Once you have spoken about one topic, you look down at the card for a moment;
   - Pause and think about what to say next and relax (In fact, pausing correctly is part of fluency and coherence because it allows the listener to understand your main points.);
   - Look up at the examiner, make eye contact;
   - Start again: *The next thing I am going to tell you is …*
8. Answer in the same way as you do in writing; namely, your talk should be well structured with three parts: The introduction of your talk can include the topic itself. The body could be expanded with reasons and examples. You can then end with your feeling or impression. Remember that it must be presented in fluent and coherent spoken language.
9. Remain eye contact with the examiner: In the test itself, it helps you to focus on the cue card as you speak but do not look at it all the time. Keep it in your hand and refer to it when possible so that you can make eye contact with the examiner.

IV. How to Do Well

❶ Read the task instructions carefully

You have to carefully read the instructions on the cue card. Each topic usually has three or four points about which you will talk. Do not miss out any point, or you will lose marks.

Example

Describe a city or a town where you live or lived.

You should say:
where it is located
what part of the city or town you are most familiar with
what the most important landmarks and places to visit are

and explain what makes that city or town special to you.

As you can see, the topic here asks you to talk about a city or a town. Next come four points on which you have to focus answering. In response to this task, you must use appropriate tenses: either the present or the past tense.

❷ Make use of 1 minute's preparation

Take the one minute provided to prepare. Brainstorm your answer by writing down all the ideas you get about the topic. You lose no marks if you use up the one minute. Two minutes can be a long time to talk solo, and the notes you make will help you to keep talking for the full two minutes.

Take the topic card above as an example:

• Location of the city or town:	Vung Tau – in the south of Vietnam, the tip of a small peninsula
• The part of the city you are most familiar with:	a significant port – a significant role in Vietnam's offshore oil industry
• Important landmarks and places to visit:	Hydrofoil Fast Ferry Station – an architectural landmark of the city – extensive beaches – Back Beach (Bãi Sau) – Front Beach (Bãi Trước) – fine sand – a favourite resort – Statue of Jesus Christ – pagodas and temples – the White Palace
• What makes that city or town special to you:	a tourist attraction, the Kite Festival, the World Food Festival

❸ Present the talk

After the minute, the examiner will ask you to start talking and you must talk on the subject until the examiner asks you to stop. You can refer to your notes during your monologue. The examiner will not ask you any questions during this part of the test; you must, hence, answer all the points you are given, speaking fluently for a few minutes by yourself.

1. Get your talk off to a memorable start with the following starters:

   I'd like to talk about ...

   I've chosen to talk about ...

   I'm going to talk about ...

   I've lived in quite a few places, but one place I particularly like was ...

   I've really only ever lived in ..., so I'll talk about that.

   I'll start by talking about ...

2. The following phrases can help you to talk about something in the past:

As far as I can remember ...

I remember quite clearly that ...

After that ...

Before that ...

While that was happening ...

The next thing I did was to ...

3. When speaking about who, when, where, how, or why, you may use the following:

My favourite ... is ...

The ... I ... most is ...

The best ... I have ever ... is ...

The kind of ... I usually prefer ... is ...

I usually go / went to ... when ...

I first became familiar with ... when I ...

I went to ... when I was ...

I saw / read this ... about ... ago, while I was ...

You can find ... next to ...

The ... is located in ...

I first met ... at ...

I ... about ... times a week / month / year.

I usually go there during ... because ...

I don't ... very often any more, since I'm ...

I ... whenever I can. I'm a big fan of it.

4. When talking about hobbies or interests and their impact, employ the following:

I was so touched by ...

This ... taught me the value of ...

The impact it had on me was to make me aware of ...

This taught me a very important lesson ...

I will never forget this ... as long as I live.

I guess the reason I tend to ... is that it's so ...

This ... always reminds me of ...

I choose this as my favourite ... because ...

I like this ... so much because it ...

The reason I prefer this ... to others is that it ...

When I see this ... I feel ...

5. When giving explanations or reasons, the signpost language below can not only help you to organise your ideas but the examiner can see the structure of your speech as well. You ought to change them into past tenses if you are talking about the past.

What I like about Nha Trang **is that I can** walk along the beach enjoying the beautiful views and swimming in the sea.

The reason I don't like grammar **is that** it often takes a long time to memorise the rules.

The reason why I enjoy music **is that** I can relax and daydream a little.

One of the good reasons about studying abroad **is being able to** learn a foreign language very easily.

One of the bad things about joining a package tour **is not being able to** arrange your time as you want to or enjoy the scenery to your heart's content.

One of the problems with using the Internet **is that you can't** always protect your systems from being attacked by hackers.

Below is a possible monologue for the topic above:

I'm going to talk about Vung Tau, a coastal city which is located in the south of Vietnam, to be more exact, it is situated at the tip of a small peninsula.

Vung Tau has traditionally been a significant port, particularly during Vietnam's period of French rule. Today, the city's importance as a shipping port has diminished, but it still plays a significant role in Vietnam's offshore oil industry.

To most tourists, Vung Tau is more interesting for its extensive beaches. Tourists often prefer swimming at the Back Beach (Bãi Sau) but sightseeing in the Front Beach (Bãi Trước). The Back Beach is well known for its over 10km of fine sand. As Vung Tau is only 130km away from Ho Chi Minh City, it is a favourite resort destination for those wishing to get away from the city.

Vung Tau is a wonderful tourist attraction. Most people prefer to travel to Vung Tau by "Hydrofoil fast ferry" in Vietnam. It is a quick way to get to and from Vung Tau. Taking the Hydrofoil is a good way to see the commercial maritime areas as the boat runs through the Saigon River to the sea. Arriving at Vung Tau, you can see the Hydrofoil Fast Ferry Station, an architectural landmark of the city. Also, tourists can visit a 32m-high Statue of Jesus Christ extending his 18.3m-long arms on the top of 170m-high Nho Mount. This is the largest sculpture in the south of Vietnam.

Whether you are religious or not, it is worth visiting Niet Ban Tinh Xa and Thich Ca Phat Dai, which are the most popular among the pagodas and temples in Vung Tau.

Another destination for local people and tourists is Bach Dinh (the White Palace) built by the French in the early century as a summer holiday house of French Governor, General Paul Doumer. Today, it exhibits hundreds of antiques collected from Con Dao Islet and attracts hundreds of tourists every day.

I think it is the sea that makes Vung Tau a paradise not only for local people but also for tourists. There are a lot of luxurious hotels along the nice beach. Especially, in recent years, the Kite Festival is held here annually, and this has helped attract more and more national and international tourists. Last May, Vung Tau first hosted the World Food Festival, which has become a new and appealing activity for this coastal region.

Example

Describe a job that you would like to do in the future.

You should say:
why you are attracted to this job
how much training, if any, would be necessary
what kind of personal qualities it would require.

One minute's preparation:

1. Read the topic card carefully. Right away, you can understand that it is about a future job. So in your talk, remember to use the future tense.
2. Jot down the key words from the instructions.
3. Think of a job you would like to do in the future.
4. Brainstorm at least two ideas for each sub-topic.

Start your monologue for two minutes with accuracy, fluency, and coherence.

What I'd like to do in the future as a career is to be a tour guide, leading visitors from home and abroad to visit all the beautiful places in Vietnam. As a tour guide, one can meet people from all walks of life and with very different cultural background. He can work and enjoy nature at the same time. I know that a tour guide should provide good services for the tourists, and he should show the visitors our profound Vietnamese cultures from the ancient civilisation to the present development. In this

way, the friendship between the Vietnamese people and people from other parts of the world can be enhanced. So, a wide knowledge is necessary if I want to do this job well. You see, my major is tourism in the university. But if I want to do this job well, I need to learn more about the Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese history. I also need some knowledge about psychology so that I could know what tourists are thinking about or what they want to see. So, I'd like to go to Britain to learn more about tourism, working for a Master's degree. It can help me better understand foreign visitors and their cultures and customs.

As a tour guide, one should be friendly, trustworthy, easy-going and patient. Of course he should have a nice voice. I think I have a lot of potential to be a good tour guide. I'm the kind of person people will feel comfortable with right away. But I'm not patient enough, so some people may not trust me at first. Maybe they think I'm too young. So, later on, in my study, I will try my best to acquire these abilities or talents.

❹ Answer briefly

Once you have finished your two minutes' talk, the examiner will stop you, and then ask you one or two simple questions on what you have talked about. What you should do at this stage is to give brief answers.

Examples

- Have you done this kind of job before?
  - Yes, I have. / No, I haven't.

- Do you know anyone who has done this kind of work?
  - Yes, I do. / No, I don't.

- Are you going to study chemical engineering at university?
  - Yes, I think I am. / Yes, I think so.

- Does it cost much to join the university sports club?
  - No, I don't think it does. / No, I don't think so.

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Note that these are closed questions, you can give short answers. If they are open questions, you, of course, must give long and complete answers.

V. Categorised Topics

This section focuses on subjects of general interest. You do not need specialised knowledge to elaborate on them. The card with the topic coupled with three or four sub-topics written on it does not usually contain difficult lexis or complicated grammar.

Part 2 covers such a wide range of topics as people (a childhood friend, an old friend, a person you admire, an adventurous person, etc.); places (a place that you would like to travel to, a restaurant you know, a hotel you have stayed in, a garden you remember visiting, etc.); objects (a magazine you think is interesting, a photograph that you remember, an important letter that you received, your favourite item of clothing, etc.); habits or hobbies (what your favourite hobbies are, what you usually do in your leisure time, etc.); plans (a city/country you plan to visit, a course you plan to take, etc.); experiences (an educational trip that you went on when you were at school, an important decision that you made, etc.); events and festivals (a festival that is important in your country, an enjoyable event that you experienced when you were at school, etc.).

Day 8 Part 2 – Common Topics (1)

I. Describing a Person

Describing people is one of the most common topics in this part of the test. Mostly, you are asked to describe someone who has had an influence on you in your life. In the cue card, you may be required to say how long you have known the person, why he / she is special and how he / she has influenced you. Another similar card may ask you to describe a person you would like to meet, explain why you have chosen this person and what effect such a meeting would have on you, etc. In your monologue, you can use the present tense to talk about this topic.

Suggestions

- For this topic, remember to give answers to these questions: What does he / she look like? What is he / she like?
- When describing, think about these points:
  1. Tenses: past, present, or future
  2. Who you are describing
  3. His / Her appearance and clothing
  4. His / Her interests and hobbies and character

Useful Words and Expressions

General Personal Impression

beautiful / pretty	handsome
cool	plain
cute	smart

Age

adolescent	mature
grown-up	middle-aged
immature	old / elderly / senior citizen
in his early / mid / late twenties	teenager
infant	toddler
juvenile	young

Height

average/medium height
short
tall

Build or Figure

obese/fat/overweight
plump
slender
slim
thin/skinny

Hair

black/brown/grey/blond hair
bushy eyebrow
curly/wavy/straight hair
fringe
long/short hair
thick/thin hair
to go/be bald
to grow a beard/a moustache/sideburns
to wear a wig
to wear one's hair up/down

Face

fair/dark complexion
flat/pointed nose
high/narrow forehead
rosy cheeks
round/square/oval/long/thin face
thick lips
to have freckles/a mole/a scar on the face
to wear heavy/light make-up

Clothes

casual clothes
checked clothes
designer coat
dress
formal clothes
sportswear
striped shirt
suit
to be properly/well dressed

Interest

collecting stamp
dance
gardening
music
sports
travelling

Job

full-time job
part-time job
self-employed

Their Life So Far

achievement
eminent
family background
high social status

ordinary
outstanding
successful

Character

a good listener
a perfectionist
absent-minded
aggressive
artistic
attentive
broad-minded
capable
careless
caring
cheerful
competent
considerate
creative
curious
dependable
dependent
diligent
diplomatic
disorganised
down to earth/practical
easy-going
efficient/inefficient
energetic
enthusiastic
excited
flexible
frank
friendly
generous
gentle
good-humoured
good-natured
hard-working
helpful
hospitable
humorous
imaginative
independent
intelligent
introvert
irritating
kind-hearted/kind
loyal
narrow-minded
open-minded
optimistic
organised
outgoing/extrovert
patient
pessimistic
polite
punctual
puzzled
quick-tempered
relaxed
reliable
responsible
self-confident
sensitive
sociable
strict/stern
thoughtful
to have a sense of humour
trustworthy/reliable
understanding
unselfish
versatile
warm-hearted
witty
worried

General Words

mutual respect
to admire
to adore
to depend/rely on (upon)
to have a lot/little in common
to hold somebody in respect
to lose contact/touch with
to share happiness and sorrow with
to share the same interests

Cue card 01.MP3

Describe a famous person you would like to meet.

You should say:
who it is
what they are famous for
what you would do if you meet them

and explain why you would like to meet them.

This topic asks you to talk about a famous person you would like to meet. In one of the sub-topics, you have to use the unreal conditional sentences in the present. So, remember to use the correct form of the second-type conditional sentences.

Sample answer

Well, the person I'd like to meet most is Zhang Yimou,who is a very famous film director in China. I've always admired him. He is a man of average height, in his forties, I think. So far, he has directed many good films. He is well known in China for his versatile talents. First of all, he is a famous director. Most of his films have won international prizes, and the actresses who have appeared in his films would consequently become popular as well. I like his film "The Road Home", which describes how a young teacher and a girl fell in love and how they worked and enjoyed their life in a small village. It's really touching with very good photography and nice music in spite of the simple plot.

Apart from his directing, he has appeared in many films as the main character, which always gives people a very deep impression. I clearly remember one film in which he played the role of a terracotta warrior who came back to life and got involved in a love affair with a woman. In recent years, instead of depicting the uncivilised and backward life in the country areas, he has made great efforts to publicise

Chinese culture. One of his famous works is a short documentary assisting China to bid for the 2008 Olympic Games. It is quite spectacular.

He is the kind of person I would really like to meet as he is a very good example of success through unfailing effort, perseverance and struggle. If I met him, I'd like to ask him about how he has succeeded against all odds. I'd also like to get some advice as to how to achieve self-fulfilment as he has done.

Suggestions

• In your description, you should use a wide range of lexical items related to the following:

Appearance
Age
Height
Clothing
Manners
Hobbies and interests
Personality
Character

• You must use the correct structures in response to the questions below:

1. **What does he/she look like?**

He looks like a film star.

She looks like someone from South Africa.

2. **What is he/she like?**

He is very polite and intelligent.

She is very patient with her students and dedicated to her work.

He's always ready to help others. He's certainly a very polite young man and very relaxed, too. He's really a role model for other people to learn from.

3. **How old is he/she?, What's his/her age?**

He is in his early/mid/late 20s.

He is still a toddler.

My mother is very tall, about 170cm. She is in her early 50s, but she looks younger than she is. She is always very kind and patient with her students.

4. What qualities does he/she have?

My friend is good-natured and gets along well with her colleagues.

He is always very careful about his appearance. So, whenever you see him, he is well dressed, tie and suit, which is good for his business. And he has a nice voice.

I think she is very intelligent, but so shy, so nervous, and so uncomfortable!

She wouldn't be very good at talking to people.

I think he has a lot of potential. He seems like a very bright guy.

He has a really nice appearance. He seems relaxed to me and he's the kind of person people feel comfortable with right away.

Exercises

1. Study the following sample questions and answers.

- What do you think is the most important quality of a person? Why?
  - Well, there are many qualities an individual can have, but the most important quality, I think, is to be kind, kind to yourself and to others.

- What are your criteria when you make friends?
  - As the saying goes, a friend in need is a friend indeed. So, when I make friends, I don't care about his or her social status or wealth, but I do attach more importance to what we have in common. Friends should share happiness and sorrow.

Practise asking and answering the following questions about friendship.

How important is it to have friends in one's life?

Is it important for you and your friend(s) to have a lot in common?

What if you and your friend(s) disagree on some issues?

Is it better to have many friends or just a few close/intimate friends?

2. Practise making presentations with the cards and follow-up questions on pages 128 and 129. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe a relative / a friend / a classmate who you like most.

You should say:
who he / she is
what he / she does
what his / her personality is like

and explain how you like him / her.

Do you have very close relationship with your relatives / friends?

Who is more important to you, your relatives or friends? Why?

Sample questions in Part 3

Can you describe the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards relatives?

How have family structures changed in Vietnam? Are the changes for better or worse?

What do you think the future would be like if Vietnam had implemented the one-child policy?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having too many relatives?

What is friendship? How important is friendship in one's life?

How has the relationship between neighbours changed in Vietnam? What are the causes? Can it be improved?

Card B

Describe a relative / a friend / a family member who you think is similar to you.

You should say:
who he / she is
what he / she does
what other people think about him / her

and explain how he / she is similar to you.

Is there anyone else who is similar to you?

Is it important for an individual to cultivate team spirit? Why?

Sample questions in Part 3

What are the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards personal relationship? (Give opinions, compare and contrast.)

What do you think of the influence of genetic factors and environment on a person's

personality? Which is more important? (Give suggestions, argue.)

What is the impact of modern technology on communication between people? Is this desirable? Will this change in the future? (Describe, give opinions, and speculate.)

Card C

Describe a character in a book you have read or a film you have seen.

You should say:
what it is
when you read the book/saw the film
how this character has influenced you

and explain what has impressed you so much.

Would you like to be like this character?

Do you know anyone who is like this character?

Sample questions in Part 3

What is the value of encouraging children to read stories or novels?

How do you think authors create characters for their books? Where do these characters come from?

Do you think that film is the best medium for telling a story?

What is the most popular film type in your country?

How are the American Hollywood films differentiated from Vietnamese films?

What do you think about the impact of foreign films on the Vietnamese film industry?

What measures should the Vietnamese government take to crack down on piracy?

What do you think about the Vietnamese film industry?

How can the cinemas attract more people to go back to cinemas?

II. Describing a Place

Describing places is also a common topic, such as a place that had a major impact on you, how it affected you and why, a place that you would like to travel to, a restaurant you know, a hotel you have stayed in, a museum or an art gallery that you have visited, or a garden you remember visiting, etc. The present simple tense is mostly used in this speech.

Suggestions

- Be ready to talk about the following aspects, together with their significance:

  Location and size

Physical appearance – buildings, roads, public transport, industry

Life in that place – pace of life, people's attitudes, nightlife

Ideas to talk about Chongqing

Physical appearance:

Buildings	modern, commercial high-rise buildings; traditional style architecture – very little left; unique styles for a mountain city, building on rocks with a few floors underground
Roads	many large, modern highways; winding and narrow roads in the city; heavy traffic during the rush hours; no special cycle lane
Public transport	convenient, cheap bus system but often crowded, especially during peak periods; cheap and frequent ferry service
Industry	auto, chemical, machinery, and textile

Life in that place:

Pace of life	fast compared with other places; many people work long hours
People's attitudes	open-minded, willing to accept new ideas; hospitable and ready to help others
Entertainment	very varied and expensive, pubs, cinemas and theatres

Related sentence patterns and vocabulary

There is always a lot going on/happening.
I went to an interesting place called ...
The building is located in the city square near the famous statue.
This supermarket is in a very interesting neighbourhood with lots of bars around.

appealing
arable land
barren
beautiful with autumn colours
breathtaking/amazing
bustling
busy
calm
crowded
densely populated
dramatic scenery
exotic
full of life
hilly
impressive/striking/stunning
lively/dynamic
mountainous
noisy
peaceful/tranquil
remote
snow-capped mountains
sparsely populated
spectacular views
stunningly beautiful
tree-lined streets
unforgettable

unspoiled
wild
wooded

In your description, do not use only one general term, like **beautiful**. You can use expressive terms to increase richness, such as **exciting, busy, modern, traditional, noisy, quiet, polluted, convenient, appealing**, etc.

Vocabulary related to building

architectural style
bungalow
concrete
corridor
cottage
design
dining room
entrance
exterior/interior decoration
flat
high-quality building materials
high-rise building
kitchen
light steel frame
roof
sculpture
(semi-)detached house
shrine
skyscraper
studio
temple
tile
to have a house done up/decorated
traditional/modern design
villa

Cue card 02.MP3

Describe a city or a town where you have lived.

You should say:
where it is located
what part of the city or town you are most familiar with
what the most important landmarks and places to visit are

and explain what makes that city or town special to you.

This topic asks you to talk about a city or a town you have lived. You may appropriately use the present perfect tense, but you can also use the present simple tense to state what is still true.

Sample answer

Well, I'd like to talk about Chongqing, a city I used to live in for a few years from 1994 to 2001. It's a busy mountainous city located in the southwest of China, one of the four cities directly under the jurisdiction of the central government. Indeed, its mountainous landscape with Jialing River running through makes it so attractive and unique, especially at night, with its bright lights along the river banks and on the buildings. Recently, many modern buildings have sprung up, but there are very few traditional buildings left, which is really a shame, as they have to pull down the old ones to make room for the new and high-rise commercial buildings.

As a rapidly changing city, Chongqing is famous for its auto, chemical and textile industries. But a serious problem in this city is pollution and overpopulation. In fact, there have been several cases of acid rain in the past few years. The temperature in summer can go up to as high as 37 degrees centigrade. Rush-hour traffic is another problem yet to be solved. Sometimes, you can walk faster than the buses during the peak periods. People in this city live a stressful and fast-paced life as there is very keen competition for jobs. They have to work long hours sometimes. However, people are very hospitable and ready to treat you with one of the local specialities – Chongqing hotpot. They are also quite open-minded, willing to accept new ideas and cultures.

The nightlife here is fantastic and you can find anything you want in this city, whether it's pubs, tea houses, discos, theatres, museums or cinemas. On the whole, Chongqing is quite a good place to live in.

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe a shop you often go to.

You should say:
what name it is
how often you shop there
what goods are sold there

and explain what you like or dislike most about it.

Do many of your friends do shopping there?

Is the shop popular with the local consumers?

Sample questions in Part 3

Describe the shopping habits of the Vietnamese people.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Vietnam's entry into the WTO?

How can consumers protect their rights?

With the global economy, many foreign shops or supermarkets are coming into Vietnam. Discuss this trend.

Will technology change the way we do shopping in the future? How?

What are the prospects for e-commerce?

Card B

Describe a school you have studied in.

You should say:
what it is
how long you've studied in it
what the most interesting part is

and discuss its strong and weak points.

Is it still the same today as it was when you were there?

What things do you think you should have learned but you didn't?

If you had another choice, would you choose the same school?

Sample questions in Part 3

What do you think about co-education in Vietnam?

What is your idea of an ideal teacher?/ What are the qualities of a good teacher?

Is there any room for improvement in the Vietnamese education system?

How can you achieve a balance between work and play?

Is an examination the only effective way of assessment?

Does a high degree imply the competence and performance of the degree holder?

What did you learn more from your teachers than from your parents?

can remember, about 150 guests came to wish my grandma a happy birthday. At the party, we had a very big birthday cake with the Chinese character "Longevity" on it. We lit the candles and my mother made a speech on behalf of the family, expressing our gratitude to grandma for her hard work and love in bringing up her children and grandchildren. After that, some of our relatives and friends spoke very highly of my grandma for her generosity, and the care she had given to those around her. So, everyone joined us in wishing her a happy birthday in song and gifts, and we all cheered. Then, we helped her cut and shared her birthday cake. It is a custom that if you share the birthday cake of an elderly person, you may also share her longevity.

My grandma was too excited to say a word, not about the huge cake or loads of gifts, but about seeing such a happy reunion of her family and friends. She managed to say a few words about how she appreciated such a happy occasion, and about how she had hoped to see such a gathering. But she understood that it was not very easy to have a party of this size as everyone was busy with his or her work, and my aunt and uncle lived in Shanghai. The next thing we did was to take many photos with her. I remember quite clearly that at that time I was thinking about the change of family structures. As time goes on, the young are moving away with their jobs leaving the elderly behind, lonely, helpless and sometimes miserable. How the old people long for a time to get together with their family members!

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe an important occasion, such as a wedding or a celebration, that you have attended which you enjoyed.

You should say:
- when the event took place
- who else attended
- what happened

and explain why you enjoyed it.

Is this type of celebration popular in your country?

Have you been to a similar celebration since this one?

Sample questions in Part 3

How important is it to celebrate anniversaries or special days?

How do the Vietnamese people usually celebrate important occasions? How has this changed in recent years?

What are the benefits of having national or public holidays?

Is the concept of the 5-day working week and the 2-day weekend getting out of date? How will this change in the future?

Card B

Talk about a holiday or festival you have taken recently or at some time in the past.

You should say:
where you went on your holiday
why you went on your holiday
what you did and with whom

and why you enjoyed your holiday / festival.

Is it common for people in your home town to spend their holiday in this way?

Should people take longer holidays than more short weekends? Why / Why not?

Sample questions in Part 3

How do the Vietnamese people usually spend their holidays? Are there any influences from other countries in the way they celebrate these festivals or holidays?

What do you think about the future of traditional cultures?

What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of spending holidays sightseeing?

How do you think people 50 years ago spent their holidays?

How can you justify holiday economy?

Recently more and more Vietnamese people go travelling abroad. What do you think of this trend?

Some people say that some of the presents given during festivals are intended as bribes. What is your view?

Card C

Describe an activity you recently took part in.

You should say:
what the purpose of the activity was
where and when the activity took place
who organised the event

and explain your feeling about the activity.

Would many of your friends like to have this kind of activity?

Do people often hold an indoor activity or an outdoor activity?

Sample questions in Part 3

How do people in Vietnam celebrate important occasions such as weddings or birthdays?

Is it different from what the Vietnamese people did 20 or 30 years ago?

Describe some concerts / theatre / cultural events in Vietnam. Does everyone have the same access to these events (in terms of money)?

What are the most popular ways for the Vietnamese people to have activities?

What kind of activities did your parents have when they were at your age?

Will there be any changes in the future?

Card D

Describe one of the excursions/trips you have had recently.

You should say:
where you went
who went with you
what happened

and explain what the most interesting part of this trip was.

Do you often have trips like this?

What are the most popular destinations for excursions in your area?

Sample questions in Part 3

What are the most popular tourist destinations for the Vietnamese people?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of tourism for a person or for a country?

Compare a package tour with a self-catering tour.

How has tourism changed Vietnam?

How can the places of interest be protected in Vietnam?

Will Vietnam be one of the popular tourist countries in 20 years' time? Why / Why not?

Day 9 Part 2 – Common Topics (2)

IV. Describing an Object or an Animal

In some topic / cue cards, you may be asked to describe such things as a book, a story or a movie which has had a major impact on you; or a present, a magazine, a photograph, an item of clothing, a pet you like, etc. The sub-topics also list the points you have to include, e.g. in describing a photograph that you remember, you will say when it was taken, who took it, who or what is in the photograph, and will explain how important this photograph is to you, etc.

Suggestions

• You may prepare for your vocabulary and structures when describing an object or an animal:

1. Tenses: past, present, or future
2. What
3. Why
4. Where
5. Appearance

• Your descriptions may include the points mentioned above no matter what it is – an object or an animal, but there are some slight differences: describing an animal, you can focus on its characteristics and natural habitat. On the contrary, talking about an object, you may point out its brand, appearance, and use.

Look at the following examples, one is a description of a giant panda, and the other is that of a bookcase:

The giant panda

Name (family):	the giant panda, cat's family, endangered species
Size:	big, small, shoulder-high
Appearance:	white and black coat, fat and clumsy
Natural habitat:	in the mountains of the southwestern part of Sichuan Province
Food:	bamboo
Interesting fact(s):	– decrease in number
	– face extinction
	– giant panda research centre to help protect giant pandas
	– giant pandas sent abroad as a symbol of friendship

The bookcase

Name:

Brand:

Size:

Colour:

Functions:

Uses:

Related vocabulary

Shape

hollow
oval
rectangular
round
square

Appearance

breakable
shiny surface
texture
well made

Material

aluminium
metal
plastic
wooden

Function

antique collection
decoration
gift
souvenir

Implication

invaluable
priceless
rare
reward
to mean a lot to somebody
well-chosen gift

Lexical items used to talk about an animal

animal protection
animal rights
captive breeding
conservation area
cute
endangered species
food chain
instinct
most treasured
natural habitat
shy
to be found in

to die out	to feed on
to face extinction	well preserved

Cue card 1 04.MP3

Describe a wild animal that can be found in your country.

You should say:
what it looks like
where it lives
what you like / don't like about it

and explain how people in your country generally feel about it.

In the instructions, you read "can be found". So, the present tense must mostly be used in your speech.

Sample answer

The animals I'd like to talk about are the giant pandas which have been found to live only in the mountains of the southwestern part of Sichuan Province. These animals have black and white coats. Though they look very fat and clumsy, they are so skilful in climbing up tall trees. Giant pandas are plant-eating animals with bamboo as their staple food, and they are usually very friendly unless attacked. To share this treasure with peoples around the world, the Chinese government has sent many giant pandas to foreign countries as a symbol of friendship.

However, this valuable animal is facing extinction. With environmental pollution, especially deforestation where the farmers clear up the land for farming, the giant pandas have to leave their natural habitat for strange lands where they have a lot of difficulties in adaptation. What's more, the natural cycle of their favourite food can pose another difficulty as bamboo can flower, followed by withering, so they have to move to other places. Another problem is that it is difficult for them to reproduce naturally. So, the number of these animals is reducing rapidly. Fortunately, the Chinese government has taken many effective measures to protect giant pandas by setting up some research and breeding centres to help them reproduce. In these preserves, the number of the wild animals is going up.

Cue card 2

Describe a piece of furniture in your house or flat.

You should say:
what it is
when you got it
what you use it for

and explain what is special about it.

Sample answer

I'd like to describe one very useful piece of furniture which is the bookcase in my study. This is one of the oldest objects we have in my family as it really dates back to 50 years ago when my grandfather had this furniture made when he graduated from college and became a teacher in a middle school. It is made of wood, with elaborately carved doors in the pattern of peony flowers meaning prosperity. It was painted dark red, the traditional colour in Vietnam. It is not big, with a width of 3 metres and a height of 2.2 metres.

Fifty years as it is, it is still very strong and useful. It was one of the very old, expensive but useful items of the family. It has been passed on from generation to generation. Now I am its new owner.

This bookcase has six shelves, in which we keep a large collection of books and periodicals from in and outside Vietnam. On the top shelf, we usually keep the most important books such as reference materials, dictionaries and course books for my study; the second and third shelves are reserved for my interesting collection of souvenirs from different places I've visited, such as a bamboo root carving in the shape of a pretty girl's face with long hair from the capital of Vietnam; a mini pottery vase from Binh Duong, the home of pottery. On the bottom shelves, I keep a collection of my favourite albums as well as some of the picture books I read when I was young.

Although we have moved many times since the bookcase was made, we never gave it up, because we regard it as one important part of the home. Also, this bookcase reminds us of the diligence and hard work my grandfather showed when he pursued his education in very difficult times. It can definitely give me inspiration and encouragement whenever I have difficulties. As a matter of fact, it accompanied me when I went through the challenging tasks of study and exams as well as the National College Entrance Exams last year.

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe a photograph that you have taken yourself or seen in a book, which you particularly like.

You should say:
what the picture shows
when you took it
where you saw it

and explain why you particularly like it.

Do you like taking photographs / painting / drawing?

Do you prefer photographs or paintings?

Sample questions in Part 3

Explain the value of teaching art in primary and secondary schools.

How can we take a good picture?

What is the role of traditional arts and crafts in your country?

Are technology and the video camera changing our appreciation of photography?

What is the future development of photography?

Card B

Describe one of your favourite newspapers / magazines.

You should say:
what it is
how much each copy costs
which section you like best

and explain why you like it so much.

Is this newspaper / magazine also popular with readers of different ages?

Do many people in Vietnam read newspapers / magazines?

Sample questions in Part 3

Compare magazines with newspapers.

Describe the reading habits of the Vietnamese people.

How have the traditional mass media such as radio, TV, newspapers and magazines been changed with the coming of modern media such as the Internet?

What's the attitude of the Vietnamese people towards the Internet?

Should we only be told about the good news?

What are the qualities of a good journalist?

Will the Internet replace printed books or magazines in the future?

Card C

Describe a type of food you like most (or a restaurant you often go to).

You should say:
what it is and what its ingredients are
what type of cooking is involved
where it is usually served

and explain why you like it so much.

Do many of your friends like this dish?

Can many people make the dish at home?

Sample questions in Part 3

What are the major types of food in Vietnam?

What do you think of the impact of Western food on the local food?

What are the major differences between the Vietnamese and Western foods?

On what occasions do the Vietnamese people eat out?

Has the diet habit changed in Vietnam in the last 20 or 30 years, or is it pretty much the same?

What are some of those changes?

Card D

Describe a type of clothes that you like.

You should say:
what it is
what it looks like
how often you wear it

and explain why you like it so much.

Do many people in Vietnam like this type of clothing? Why / Why not?

Is it easy to get this type of clothes?

Sample questions in Part 3

Tell me about the importance the Vietnamese people attach to clothing.

Can you describe people's attitudes towards clothes in Vietnam?

Are clothes status symbols like cars or houses in Vietnam?

What do you think of designer coats?

Do the clothes one wears reveal one's personality? Why / Why not?

Should we fall slaves to fashion? Why / Why not?

V. Describing a Hobby or a Habit

This is one of the most common topics in this part of the test. Such familiar topics as shopping, eating and drinking, watching TV, reading, etc. are frequently given. You generally use the present tenses to talk about what it is, when you perform it, how long you have done it, and explain why you like it or what you like about it, etc.

Suggestions

• For your monologue about this topic, in indicating when, where, how often, why, you may apply the suggested statements below:

I usually go to the cinema after work / at weekends.

We normally take our annual vacation in late August or early September.

I cook for my friends about twice a week / once a month.

I usually buy my daily necessities in the supermarket because it's convenient.

I don't go to the cinema very often since I'm so busy with my study.

I do bodybuilding whenever I have time. I think it's important to maintain fitness.

Related vocabulary

a box-office hit	blues
A film is officially released.	classical music
a tear jerker	climax
acting	comedian
action/kungfu movie	comedy
actor/actress	complicated
animated pictures/cartoon	composer
band	concert hall

confusing	photography
depressing	plot
detective story	pop music
dramatic	rap
exciting/exhilarating	rock 'n' roll
folk music	romance/love story
hero/heroine	science fiction
horror film/thriller	setting
jazz	singer
main character	slow
moving	special effects
music	symphony
musical instrument	time
musician	to shoot a film
name of the writer/film	traditional/international music
orchestra	tragedy
ordinary	(un)predictable
original	Western movie

Cue card 05.MP3

Describe an interesting film you have seen recently.

You should say:
what its name is
when you saw it
what it is about

and explain why it was so enjoyable.

This task asks you to describe a film you have recently seen. You thus use the past tenses to talk about it, but the present simple tense is suitable in explaining how it was so enjoyable to you.

Sample answer

The film I'm going to talk about is named "Guasha", or "Chinese Treatment", directed by a Hong Kong director and starring Jiang Wenli, a famous Chinese actress, and Liang Jiahui, a Hong Kong film star. It became a box-office hit as soon as it was released in China.

The setting is in the United States in the 90s. It is about a Chinese family who lived in the American society peacefully and successfully until the main character's father, a retired man from Beijing visited them in the States. The old man strongly felt the cultural differences or conflicts, fully illustrated by the case of Chinese treatment for a cold of the little boy, the old man's grandson. Guasha, in the traditional medicine, means you rub the back with a coin repeatedly until it becomes red so as to get rid of internal humidity. It is believed to be an effective way of treating colds. In the United States, however, it was taken as the mistreatment of a person, in this film, a child. So, you can imagine what happened. It was a mess for this family. As a result, the main character lost his friends, job and reputation. The climax occurs when the Chinese family decided to go back to their culture while the man's boss experienced and appreciated this wonderful traditional practice of Guasha in person in the China Town, and then you can imagine everything has changed.

You see, the plot is simple but thought-provoking. It reveals the cultural differences and conflicts in a multicultural society. This film wants to pass on this message that when we are exchanging science and technology with the rest of the world, we should not neglect these cultural factors. Besides the good acting, the actors and actresses speak very good English. And there is nice photography and music, too.

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe one of the most popular TV shows in your country.

You should say:
what the programme is called
who it features or stars
what it is about

and discuss why it is so popular.

Do many of your friends like this programme?

What programmes are the most popular with young people?

Sample questions in Part 3

How important do you think is the invention of TV in the 20th century?

What are the benefits and possible dangers TV has brought to us?

Are we used to bad news on TV?

Should there be more censorship on TV or less restrictions? Should a child's viewing be limited?

What are the major sources for the Vietnamese people to get their information from?

Compare the traditional mass media with the modern media.

Card B

Describe a phone call you have received recently.

You should say:
who called
when it was
what it was about

and discuss why making phone calls is so popular.

Do you often phone your friends?

How often do you receive a phone call?

Sample questions in Part 3

How important do you think is the use of telephone in daily communication?

What are the benefits and possible dangers telecommunication has brought to us?

Compare the development of telecommunication with that of the postal service.

How has telecommunication changed your life? Has the relationship between people been strongly affected by modern communication?

Will telecommunication be the major source of communication 20 years from now? Explain.

Card C

Describe your favourite sports.

You should say:
what it is
how often you go for it
who you play with

and explain why you like it so much.

Do many of your friends play the same kind of sports?

Is the number of people playing sports on the rise or on the decline? Why?

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Sample questions in Part 3

Why do people play sports in Vietnam, for health or enjoyment?

What are the most common sports in Vietnam?

What is more important, taking part or winning?

Should dangerous sports be prohibited by law? Why/Why not?

What do you think of the use of drugs to make one compete better?

What do you think would be the most popular sports in Vietnam in 50 years' time?

Card D

Describe your favourite means of transport.

You should say:
what it is
when and how often you use it
why you use it

and explain its advantages over other types of transport.

Do many of your friends take this kind of transport?

Will you change your means of transport later on? Why?

Sample questions in Part 3

How has transport changed in Vietnam in the past few decades?

What are the major causes of road accident? Are there any solutions?

Has the government done enough to solve the traffic problems?

What do you think the traffic will be like in the next, say, 20 years?

Should the government encourage the use of private cars or public transport? Why/ Why not?

VI. Describing a Process

This kind of topic may involve describing how to use an electrical appliance, a computer, a CD player, etc.; or describing a procedure of something. The present simple tense and commands are mostly used in this mini-talk.

Suggestions

- Be prepared for the points below:

1. Tenses: past, present, or future
2. What

3. Why

4. How long

5. Order

• Take a look at the example of how steamed dumplings are made. First, jot down some basic steps to prepare for the talk, and then add appropriate connectors to make it a coherent mini-talk.

Step 1: Planning stage. Get flour and raw materials such as vegetables and meat.

Step 2: Make dough by mixing the flour with water; chop the vegetables and meat to make filling.

Step 3: Chop the dough into little pieces and flatten each dough piece into a wrapper.

Step 4: Put the filling into each wrapper and make it into different shapes.

Step 5: Boil the dumplings in boiling water for about 10 minutes.

Step 1: **The first** is the planning stage. You need to get flour and very fresh raw materials such as vegetables and meat, preferably celery and lean meat.

Step 2: **The next step** is to make dough by mixing the flour with water; then, chop the vegetables and meat into little bits to make filling by mixing them fully with salt and ginger.

Step 3: **The third stage** is to chop the dough into little pieces and flatten each dough piece into a wrapper for the filling.

Step 4: This is where you need a lot of teamwork to put the filling into each wrapper and make it into different shapes.

Step 5: **The last stage** is to put the dumplings in boiling water and cook them for about 10 minutes.

• Below are some common connectors you may use in describing a process or a procedure:

first, second, third, fourth, then, next, finally, soon, before, afterward, lately, later, meanwhile, etc.

The first thing you should do / need to do is ...

To start with, you should / need to do ... While you are + V-ing, ...

First of all, you should / need to ... Finally, ...

The first step is ... After + V-ing ..., you should ...

The last thing you need to do is ... Then ...

After that, ... Don't forget to ...

Next ... Make sure you (don't) ...

It's important to ...

Cue card 06.MP3

Describe the process of making fast food.

You should say:
what it is
how you make it
why you like to make this kind of food.

Sample answer

I'd like to talk about the process of making Jiaozi, a traditional Chinese food in the north of China. It involves a lot of teamwork and takes a long time to prepare. The first stage is quite important as it can decide on the quality and taste of your final products – tasty Jiaozi. You need to get good quality flour and very fresh raw materials such as vegetables and meat, preferably celery and lean meat, i.e. pork or beef.

The next step is to make dough by mixing the flour with water, and then leave it for a while; then, chop the vegetables and meat into little bits to make filling by mixing them fully with salt, and ginger, if you like.

The third step is to chop the dough into little pieces and flatten each piece into a wrapper. Obviously, this is where you need a lot of teamwork to put the filling into each wrapper and to wrap it up closely in case it bursts, and you can make it into different shapes. Finally, you need to put the dumplings in boiling water and cook them for about 10 minutes, and then the Jiaozi are ready for serving.

Nowadays, you can get the ready-made or frozen Jiaozi from the supermarket, but they never taste as delicious as those you make yourself.

Another example

To wash your dog properly, you should follow several steps with the utmost care. First, you should make sure that your dog knows nothing, in advance, of your plan to wash him. After quietly preparing his tub of lukewarm water, you should plunge him into it tenderly but firmly. Then, keeping his head well above water, you should soap his whole body, proceeding from his neck to his tail. After your pet is completely covered with soap, be sure to rinse him thoroughly. For your dog, being washed is an experience that cannot end soon enough. Therefore, as soon as possible, you should both enjoy the final step of his bath – the vigorous sport of drying him.

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe how to make something.

You should say:
what it is
what you need to make it for
what the steps are

and explain what important skills you need to do it well.

Do many of your friends like handmade objects?

Is it easy to get some materials to make a handicraft?

Sample questions in Part 3

Is it important to keep traditions? Why?

Can traditions coexist with modern technology? Why / Why not?

Should a visitor to a foreign country imitate the local people or should the host country welcome multiculture?

Card B

Describe a skill you have learned that you think is very useful.

You should say:
what it is
where and when you learned it
who taught you
how often you use it

and explain why you think this skill is so useful.

Have many of your friends learnt this skill?

Is there a special age for people to learn a skill? Why / Why not?

Sample questions in Part 3

What are the most popular skills for people to learn in Vietnam?

How are the skills people preferred to learn in the past different from those of today?

How will people be disadvantaged if they don't have such skills as driving or computer?

Will that change in the future?

When do you think is the best time to learn a skill?

Have there been any changes in job requirements for skills?

Card C

Describe your favourite way to relax.

You should say:
what it is
when and where is the best to relax
how you'd like to relax (i.e. activities)

and explain why you like this way of relaxation.

Do many of your friends like this type of relaxation?

What are the other common types of relaxation?

Sample questions in Part 3

What are the causes of pressure?

How can the Vietnamese people achieve a balance between physical and psychological well-being?

Compare the living styles of today and 20 years ago in terms of stress and social strain.

What are your suggestions for releasing pressure?

Day 10 Part 2 – Common Topics (3)

VII. Describing Experiences

Sometimes, you may be asked to describe a past experience like an educational trip, your childhood, or your first day to school, etc. In the talk, you will describe what it was, what happened, how it affected you, and especially why it was important to you. The past tenses are used in this presentation.

Suggestions

- Describing an experience centres upon the points below:

1. When
2. Where
3. Who
4. What
5. How important

- You must use the past tenses to describe the event, and the present perfect to state its significance or how important it was to you.

- The following expressions are often used to talk about a past experience:

I can still remember the time when I went to my kindergarten.

I'll never forget the time when I first went to university.

It all started when I went to the subway station.

Once, when I was a middle school student, I attended a meeting which I will never forget.

I took my first job seriously and always worked overtime.

I regard it as a learning experience.

- The phrases below can be used to express feelings:

I felt so excited that I could jump with joy.

I was in a very good mood.

I felt like I was in heaven.

I was filled with joy / curiosity.

I felt so disappointed / depressed.

Related vocabulary

As far as I can remember ...	to enjoy oneself/to have a good time
in retrospect	to have a great effect on
Once I ...	to leave a deep impression on
to be impressed by	to take something seriously
to come to realise	

The following lexical items are useful for talking about an experience related to schooling:

age	personality
application	practice
bilingual	skill
communicative activities	teacher
competitive	technology
curriculum	textbook
gender (man or woman)	theory
global economy	to communicate
nationality	tuition

Cue card 07.MP3

Describe an English course you have ever attended.

You should say:
- who your teachers were
- what you studied
- how long the course was
- how useful the course was

and explain how the course has affected your life.

Do many people take this course?

Is it easy to find an English learning course in your city?

Reading the task instructions, you can be aware that you have to use the past simple tense to present the four sub-topics, but the present perfect tense is suitable for explaining how the course has had an impact on your life.

Sample answer

I'd like to talk about a short intensive English course I took in the ILTC in Sichuan University from March to July. This five-month intensive training course aimed to prepare us to sit the IELTS test in September. We had three British teachers and three Chinese teachers. All of them were so professional and very experienced. They always thought of interesting communicative activities so that we could practise our English. Before I joined this class, I was so poor in speaking and listening and couldn't understand what other people were talking about, especially when they spoke very fast. I didn't have any idea of what IELTS writing was like. At the beginning, I felt it was very difficult to catch up with my classmates. Then my teachers talked with me and helped me patiently and gave me a lot of encouragement. After a few weeks, I found myself able to communicate with the native speakers quite comfortably. I was so amazed. Actually in the first 12 weeks, we didn't have any IELTS-oriented classes. Instead, we just improved our basic communication skills. In the last few weeks, we did some mock tests and interviews to get familiar with the format of the test. It is clear that this course has greatly improved our communication skills instead of just being exam-oriented. With the teachers' help, all of us in the class have benefited a lot from this course and greatly improved our communication skills in English.

As you know, with China's joining the WTO, English has become ever so important not only in foreign trade and communication but also in cultural exchange. Actually, it has become the prerequisite for getting a good job apart from your professional knowledge.

I'm so happy that I'm bilingual now in English and Chinese. And there will be a lot more job opportunities for me in this competitive world.

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe a health problem you once had (or talk about someone else's problem).
You should say:
the nature of the problem
why the problem occurred
what you (or the other person) could not do because of the problem
what you (or the other person) had to do to get better
and discuss the health care system in your city.

Do you think this problem is very common in Vietnam?

What do you usually do about it?

Sample questions in Part 3

Describe the attitudes and ways of the Vietnamese people towards keeping healthy.

Is health care the responsibility of the individual or the government?

To what extent do you think doctors should tell the patients the truth?

What are the qualities of a good doctor?

How important is the patient's attitude in the course of his/her treatment?

Should the government spend more money on preventive measures or on treatment?

What do you think of the hospital facilities in your area?

What's your opinion about euthanasia?

Card B

Describe a news story you have read or heard about recently.

You should say:
what it was
who wrote it
when it was published

and explain what has impressed you so much.

What kind of reading is most popular with young people today?

Do you like discussing the reading with your friends? Why?

Sample questions in Part 3

Describe the reading habits of the Vietnamese people.

How can illiteracy be effectively eliminated in Vietnam?

What attitudes do the Vietnamese people take towards piracy, especially in publication?

Will the use of the Internet change people's reading habits or replace books in the future?

Should there be more strict censorship or less restriction on publications?

How can you justify your opinions?

Card C

Describe an important decision you have made.

You should say:
what it was
why you made it
how important it was
whether it was a good decision or not

and explain what effect the decision had on your life.

Have you ever made a decision on the spur of the moment? Why?

How has this decision affected your life so far?

What benefits do you hope the decision will bring?

Sample questions in Part 3

What's the most important factor in making a decision? Give your reasons.

To what extent do decisions affect people's lives?

Do doctors have to make more important decisions than taxi drivers? Why?

Do parents in Vietnam always make decisions for their children when they choose a major or a school? Why / Why not?

What are the advantages and disadvantages for parents to make decisions for young people?

Card D

Describe your experience in learning English.

You should say:
how long you have learned English
what methods you have used in learning English
what aspect of English you find the most difficult

and explain whether English is important in your work or study.

Is there any English learning method you've found most effective?

What other foreign languages are also popular in Vietnam?

Do you find American English easier or more difficult to understand than British English?

Sample questions in Part 3

What role does a foreign language play in Vietnam's economic development?

Is it possible to have one single world language? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

What are the causes of losing some languages and cultures?

Some people say that girls learn English more effectively than boys. Do you think language learning efficiency is related to gender?

Learning a language is a hard job, but computer can make the job easier. Can English teachers retire if computer takes over part of the teaching job?

Card E

Describe a most unforgettable day/a period of time in your life.

You should say:
when it was
what happened
who was with you

and explain why it is so special to you.

Do many other people have such an experience?

Would you like to have such a day again? Why / Why not?

Sample questions in Part 3

To what extent can a childhood experience influence one's future development?

How is the childhood of today's children different from that of your parents' time when they were young?

How far do you agree that childhood is the happiest time in one's lifetime?

What should parents do to ensure their children a happy childhood?

Is the personality of a child influenced more by the parents or the environment?

Card F

Describe a traffic problem you have ever met.

You should say:
what it was
when it happened
what you were doing then

and discuss the traffic system in your city.

Does this problem often happen?

What's the most popular means of transport in your city?

Sample questions in Part 3

How has transport changed in Vietnam in recent few decades?

How effective is the traffic system in your city?

What should the government do to improve the traffic system in your country?

How can traffic accidents be reduced in your city?

Should a city work more to develop public transport or encourage more people to buy private cars? Explain.

Card G

Describe an interesting story that you've read or heard about recently.

You should say:
what it was
where you learned about it
who were involved in it

and explain what was special about it.

Where do you usually get your news from?

How do you keep up with the latest news?

Sample questions in Part 3

What are the common ways for people in Vietnam to get news?

How do they manage to keep well informed?

Will the Internet replace newspapers or magazines, i.e. the traditional mass media in the future? Why / Why not?

Are the public used to bad news? To what extent should the public be informed of bad news?

How important is a sense of humour for an individual?

VIII. Describing Technology

Technology has played an essential part in the modern human life. It is, hence, one of the most frequently-seen topics in the IELTS test. In this part of the test, you may be required to describe an electrical device or a piece of equipment that is used daily. You are expected to be able to use lexis and tenses accurately.

Suggestions

- Bear in mind the following points in coping with this topic:

1. Tenses: past, present, or future
2. What
3. When
4. Practical use
5. How important

Related vocabulary

artificial satellite	productivity
automation	shortcut
breakthrough	technological advance
camcorder	the World Wide Web
cloning technology	through trial and error
computer	to appear/to make its first appearance
DNA fingerprinting	to apply theory into practice
genetic engineering	to be introduced/invented
impact on our daily life	to master the skill/technique
industrial robot	to reach one's goal
innovation	user-friendly
invention	voice pen
Practice makes perfect.	with the pace of life accelerating

Cue card 08.MP3

Describe an important invention after computers.

You should say:
what it is
when it was invented
what it is used for

and explain the significance of this invention.

Sample answer

An important invention I'd like to talk about is the World Wide Web, which was introduced in 1989. With this invention came the great information revolution. People all over the world can make use of this new technology to find information on current affairs, astrology, movies, UFOs – just about anything. And it is so easy to use. You just use a modem to connect the computer to the phone line or ADSL, which stands for Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, and you can go online and use the World Wide Web. Before it was invented, people got their news or information from the traditional mass media: newspapers, radio broadcasts or TV programmes. It was so time-consuming and very slow. But today, with the World Wide Web, we can get access to an enormous amount of information that's readily available.

As you know, in the modern society, information plays a very important role in our daily life. So the World Wide Web has brought us a lot of benefits. First of all, people can use it to exchange information with each other, for example, to communicate with those who have the same ideas as you by joining a "chat group" on a special subject. In this way, you can get entertainment as well as make friends; those who want to learn can benefit from this online classroom at home whenever they have time as there are so many courses offered on the Internet. And governments all over the world have attached great importance to the modern media just because of its effectiveness, fast speed, large volume and easy access. We can safely say that this technology has also narrowed the technological gap between the industrial and developing countries.

Anyway, I think the World Wide Web is one of the greatest inventions for human beings in the course of human civilisation.

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe a small piece of technology which is most useful to you.

You should say:
what it is
how often you use it
how long you've had it

and explain why you think it is the most useful object to you.

Is it very popular with other people?

Is there any other equipment that is equally useful in your life?

Sample questions in Part 3

How important is technology to the Vietnamese people?

What are the most noticeable ways that technology has changed Vietnam?

What are the advantages and disadvantages that technology has brought us?

What other benefits will technology bring to Vietnam 20 years from now?

Some people fear that people will become slaves to the things they invent. What do you think of it?

Has technology made our life busier or freer? Explain.

Will the technology of today still be used in 50 years' time?

Talk about the technological development in Vietnam in recent years.

Will modern technology replace some of the traditional skills in Vietnam?

Card B

Describe an important technological advance or social change in your country.

You should say:
what it was
how it happened
who were involved in it

and explain the effects it has had on you.

Do you often have this kind of happening in your life?

Do people welcome changes in their life? Why / Why not?

Sample questions in Part 3

Describe the major changes in your society in recent few years.

What are the advantages and disadvantages that changes may bring about?

What are the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards changes?

Please comment on the importance of changes versus stability in your country.

IX. Describing Something Ideal or Imaginary

Once in a while, you are asked to talk about something like an ideal job, home, school, or person, etc. Specifically, you have to use your imagination in the description. It is essential that you use the present simple tense and subjunctive mood.

Suggestions

- Be ready to talk about this topic by being well prepared for the points below:

1. Tenses and mood: the present simple tense and subjunctive mood
2. What
3. Why
4. How
5. Where

Cue card 09.MP3

Describe an ideal holiday you would like to have.

You should say:
where it would be
who you would be with
what you would do

and explain why this would be so enjoyable for you.

Skimming through the instructions, you should immediately pay attention to the phrase "would like to". You will, therefore, be careful in using the subjunctive mood correctly when presenting your wish, but the present simple tense is also possible in mentioning current situations or factual information.

Sample answer

I'd say that my ideal holiday would be a two-week holiday with my close friend Lily in Paris. She is now working in a hospital as a doctor, and we have been travelling together during our holidays. We've been to most of the places in China but we haven't been to Europe, which has attracted us so much, especially Paris.

The reason we have chosen Paris is that we've been longing to go to Paris for ages. We've heard so much about this beautiful city and its culture from our teachers and the books of art and literature. If we had a two-week holiday, we could visit the famous places such as the Louvre Museum, the Arc de Triomphe, or climb up the famous Eiffel Tower and walk along the beautiful Seine River. Another reason for a holiday in France is that I've learned French as my second foreign language. I'd like to experience this beautiful language in its native place and see whether I can use it to communicate with the native speakers there. What we'd like to do most would be to go to the fashion shows which we have seen a lot on TV and hopefully, we

could afford some of the fashionable clothes. And we'd also like to taste French wine and exotic food there. On this kind of holiday we could realise our long-cherished dreams and experience different cultures. It could also give us a very relaxing time. This is the kind of holiday I'd really love to have one day.

Exercise

Practise making presentations with the following cards and follow-up questions. Record your presentation into a cassette recorder and check it with a study partner. Meanwhile, think about how to answer the sample questions that follow.

Card A

Describe your ideal home or place to live.

You should say:
where it would be
how big it would be
what it would contain

and explain why this kind of accommodation would attract you so much.

Do you think you will live in this home one day?

Is this very different from your home today?

Sample questions in Part 3

What kind of homes do most people in your country live in?

What are the advantages of living in an apartment?

Is it the role of the state to provide subsidised housing for people on a low income?

Describe the changes of accommodation in your city.

What do you think of the future development of accommodation in Vietnam?

Will future technology change the way we live?

What do you think of the real estate business in Vietnam?

How does the Vietnamese government treat the old buildings?

Card B

Describe your ideal place to study.

You should say:
where it would be
what equipment and furniture it would contain
how it would be decorated

and explain how important such a place would be for you.

Do you think you will ever find somewhere like this?

Do you think your surroundings matter when you are studying?

Sample questions in Part 3

How important is learning to a person in his lifetime?

What is the best time for a person to learn a new skill or a new language?

Explain the balance between theory and practice, degree and experience.

The Vietnamese education system is improving. Can you tell me in which aspects there are changes?

What do you think are the criteria for a top student? Explain.

What do you think of the Vietnamese education system?

Card C

Describe an ideal teacher.

You should say:
what he/she would be like
what he/she should do
how you would like to work with them

and discuss the possible outcomes with such a teacher teaching.

Are there many teachers like what you described just now?

Who is your favourite teacher in school?

Have your teachers influenced you a lot?

Sample questions in Part 3

Discuss the role of the learner and the teacher in the learning process.

Is it possible to have computers replace human teachers in the classroom?

What is the greatest problem in the Vietnamese education?

What are the qualities of a good teacher?

How important is education to an individual in his lifetime (effects of education on a person)?

What role do private schools play in education?

Is it justifiable that those with a higher degree should receive higher pay?

Day 11 The IELTS Speaking Test – Part 3

I. An Overview

In this section, the candidate will participate in a two-way discussion with the examiner. The topic will be an expansion of the subject he / she spoke about in Part 2. The questions in Part 2 relate more to the candidate's personal experience whereas in Part 3, he / she will be asked more general, extended or in-depth questions for the examiner to assess his / her ability of expansion on a topic through comparing and contrasting, narrating, justifying, analysing, discussing, or speculating on issues. Part 3 lasts 4 – 5 minutes.

II. Useful Tips

Part 3 is where the final score is given to a candidate. This is part of the test where he / she must excel. Thus, do as best as possible without trying too hard or getting yourself into problems. Although a number of sources suggest that scores are averaged between the three parts of the Speaking test, this stage is where the 'ceiling' is established. Your final score may mostly be decided by your performance in Part 3.

You will certainly impress the assessor if you apply the useful tips below:

1. Do not repeat what you have talked about in Part 2 since the questions in Part 2 relate more to your personal experience while Part 3 requires more general, extended, or in-depth responses.
2. Develop language that is appropriate for the task. For example, employing phrases such as *similar to* or *different from* is useful for a comparison and contrast topic.
3. If you need time to collect your thoughts, use expressions (sparingly) like *That's a good question., Well, let me think ...*
4. Do avoid answers with only *yes / no*. Try to come up with complete answers, offer examples to back up a certain statement, or expand your ideas as much as you can.
5. Help make your contributions memorable. Try explaining a point using a short, personal anecdote.
6. If the examiner asks a question that you do not understand, take control of the situation with questions such as those that appear below. Responding like this will show evidence of your communication skills.

   a. If the examiner uses a word or phrase that you do not understand, say something like:

   Sorry, but could you explain what you mean by ... or

   I haven't come across that word / expression before. Could you explain, what you mean?

b. If you simply did not hear something that was asked, respond with:

Excuse me, I didn't quite catch that. Could you say that again?

I'm sorry, but would you mind repeating that?

c. If you want to make sure you have understood what the examiner has asked, you could say:

Do you mean ...?

When you say ...?

Are you asking ...?

7. Do not memorise answers in preparation for the test. The examiner will hear that you are not speaking naturally and will change the topic.
8. Use a wide range of lexis and structures in your talk as this is one of the major marking criteria.
9. Maintain eye contact with the examiner. You need to present yourself in a confident way by looking directly into his / her eyes.

III. Common Topics and Suggestions

❶ The most common question words raised in this part

When ...?

What if ...? (What will / would you do if ...? What would happen if ...?)

Where ...?

How ...?

Why ...?

Have you considered ...?

Do you think ...?

Why do you think that ...?

How do you feel about ...?

Is ... important, do you think?

To what extent / How far do you think ...?

❷ Suggestions

1. Questions in Part 3 are thematically linked with those in Part 2.

Some examples are shown below:

Part 2	Part 3
Describing a teacher	Education in your country, learning styles, etc.
Describing a person	Role of the family in modern life, parents' responsibilities, etc.
Describing a problem	Modern life, is it easier or harder than before?

In actual fact, you can predict what you will be asked so as to be well prepared. For instance, if you talked about **the place you once lived** in the previous part, you may hear this statement from the examiner:

We've been talking about "the place you lived", and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

When you hear the examiner say this transition sentence, you know that Part 3 is starting. Be ready!

The sub-topics related to this subject area may be:

a. Work and housing

Is it a good idea for people to work away from home?

What are the disadvantages of commuting long distance to work?

Would technology help to change the way we live in the future?

b. Architecture

Would you prefer to live in a house or a flat?

Do you think architects pay more attention to the appearance of buildings than to the basic requirement of shelter?

To what extent does climate determine the kind of houses we build?

c. Housing and the state

Should the state provide cheap housing for low-income earners?

What can be done to help people who are homeless?

Is it the responsibility of the state or the individual to provide housing for the aged?

If **a perfect evening out** has been given in Part 2, now you may have chance to discuss with the examiner the sub-topics below:

We've been talking about "a perfect evening out", and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

a. Common entertainment places

Describe, compare (past) and give opinions.

b. Home versus public entertainment

Compare, give opinions and speculate.

c. Links between nightlife and crime

Describe, support opinions and suggest.

If a famous person has previously been referred to, now you may have chance to discuss with the examiner the sub-topics below:

We've been talking about "a famous person", and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

a. Attitudes to fame

Describe, compare (countries) and speculate.

b. Effects of technology on fame

Describe and speculate.

c. Responsibilities of celebrities

Give and support opinions.

If a wild animal has been asked in Part 2, now you may have chance to discuss with the examiner the sub-topics below:

We've been talking about "a wild animal", and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

a. Public attitudes to wildlife

Describe, compare, suggest and/or give opinions.

b. Human exploitation of animals

Describe and give opinions.

c. Wildlife preservation

Suggest and speculate.

2. You should note that Part 3 puts more weight on your communicative competence, not your personal opinion. So, do express yourself to show your real language ability to the examiner.

3. Try to work out some necessary steps in dealing with a challenging question. For instance: Should the state provide cheap housing for low-income earners?

Step 1 – Analyse the topic: *Is it actually the responsibility of the state to provide housing to low-income earners?*

Step 2 – Consider whether or not there are some debatable terms out of the key words of the topic. For example, what is meant by *low-income earners*?

Step 3 – Use the General-Specific technique. In other words, as soon as you hear the question, give a general opinion about the topic. Immediately think of a definite answer either Yes or No to this question.

Step 4 – Give at least two specific reasons or examples to justify your viewpoint. For instance, if you say *yes* to the question, you can support it with these two ideas: *Firstly, everybody has the right to live decently; secondly, providing cheap housing to the poor is certainly the responsibility of the state.*

Step 5 – You may employ some starters like *I think, I feel, I don't think* in presenting your viewpoint.

4. To give opinions, you may use the following expressions:

I think / believe that ...

What I think is this: ...

As far as I'm concerned, ...

Examples

- **Should the state provide cheap housing for low-income earners?**
  - Well, yes, it should. I think that the government should provide cheap houses for people who don't earn much money (giving a general opinion). Because if we don't do this, they may end up sleeping on the street or in the park, and this will only reflect very badly on our society as a whole (giving specific reasons).
  - I feel it's really the responsibility of the government to provide housing, just as they provide education and, ideally, health services. That's one of the reasons why we pay taxes.

- **To what extent does climate determine the kind of houses we build?**
  - Well, in my view, climate probably has quite a lot to do with the way we design and build our houses (giving a general opinion). For instance, in the northern part of Japan, where it snows a lot and is very windy, you find houses built with a steep roof so that the snow can't settle on the roof or damage the roof, and the houses also have fewer windows so as to keep out the cold air. But in the southern part, the houses are often built with more windows for good ventilation, and you know, with a verandah to keep the sun out of the rooms and to provide a cool place to sit.

- **How has technology changed the way people live or work in recent years?**
  - Well, I think, in the last few decades, technology has greatly changed our lives, either in work or in our daily life. Computer is a good case in point. In the past few years, more and more people have found it so convenient and efficient to use computers to help them do calculation, word processing and data analysis. Computers have also

facilitated our communication by shortening the distance and saving time. We can send a message to our friends who can receive it within seconds on the other side of the world by a simple click. Moreover, we can get easy access to a great deal of information by surfing the Internet. But it has also brought a lot of worry and pressure to the older people who are desperately trying to keep up. Those who do not know how to use a computer are very much disadvantaged in their work or in their life.

- **What would be the changes technology could bring us in the future?**

  - In my opinion, technology would certainly bring more changes to our life. Er, you see, the world is suffering from overpopulation and the greenhouse effect. Perhaps, technology could help us find another planet with living environment similar to our own to live on; we could find a better place to keep away from the increasing warmth on the earth, for example, we might live under the sea, cool and quiet; it is possible that the global inhabitants, having seen enough of earth, might enjoy travelling between stars. Well, it may seem very strange and unrealistic to some people, but I think technology can help us achieve all these.

IV. Transition Signals in Giving Opinions

❶ Giving opinions

I think / believe that	I strongly believe that ...
As far as I can see, ...	As far as I'm concerned, ...
In my opinion / view, ...	From my point of view, I think ...
It seems to me that ...	I would say / think that ...
Well, I think there are ... reasons: ...	Well, the main reasons I think include ...
A lot of people think that ... but I think ...	Personally, I think ...
Take ... as an example / instance.	... is a good case in point / good example.
One example of this is ...	I can give you one example of ...

Example

I think Vietnam's joining the WTO can bring us a lot of benefits. For a start, the increase in foreign trade will improve the economy, as foreign trade will explore a larger market for its goods. Besides, with the incoming of more foreign or multinational companies, there will be more job opportunities for us. However, if we cannot sell our products or services, there will be a great disadvantage as we cannot meet the challenge and our market will be greatly taken up or shared by foreign companies.

❷ Expressing regrets

I wish ... I should have ...

If only ... I shouldn't have ...

I regret ...

Example

I wish I had learned Engineering as my major in the university. But unfortunately, I majored in the Vietnamese language and literature. I enjoyed it actually, especially the classical novels. But its disadvantage is that I've found it so difficult to find a satisfactory job. I regret taking my father's advice. My father is a Vietnamese teacher in a middle school. He wanted me to follow him to inherit the traditional Vietnamese literature. But he did not expect that it would be so difficult for me to find a satisfactory job now. I think at the moment, I can only live with the job of being an editor.

❸ Stating preferences

As far as I'm concerned, the best ... From my point of view, the best ...

I'd go for this one because ... I'd much prefer that one because ...

This one is preferable because ... I'd rather have that one because ...

Example

From my point of view, the best place to spend an ideal holiday is Bali Sol in the Far East, because it is an exciting exotic island so different from the life we are used to here. There, we can enjoy the palm trees, relax and sunbathe on the beach, and go on some interesting cruises at night.

❹ Comparing and contrasting

1. Common connectors

Showing similarities: likewise, like, similarly, at the same time, also, too, in the same way, equally important

Showing differences: in contrast, on the other hand, still, instead, rather, on the contrary, after all, unlike

2. Common comparative sentences

A is	considerably / a great deal / (very) much / (quite) a lot somewhat a bit / a little slightly hardly only just	smaller bigger cheaper etc.	than B.

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A is	exactly just virtually practically more or less almost nearly approximately about	the same as B.
A is not	exactly entirely quite precisely	

A is	totally completely entirely quite	different from B.

A and B are	different dissimilar	in every	way. respect.
	totally completely entirely quite	different.	

Examples

E-commerce is becoming **more and more popular.**

The number of the Internet users **has risen rapidly** in the last five years.

There has been **a rapid increase** in the number of computer users.

The number of computers sold this month has been **on the rise/decline.**

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• Can you tell me what kinds of entertainment people have in your home town?

◦ Yes, of course. There are many different forms of entertainment for them nowadays. Some people who enjoy active activities can go to theme bars, for example, toy bars, pottery bars, and even book bars where they can read while enjoying a glass of wine. Those who prefer passive activities can go to movies or theatres. Others who are bored with the urban life can go to the rural area and sit back in the tea house or an orchard, breathing the fresh air and enjoying the country view to their heart's content.

3. Expressing similarities

In spite of the obvious differences in size and population, City A and City B have quite a lot in common.

Cities A and B are fairly similar in size, though the area of City A is slightly larger.

There isn't much difference in population between City A and City B, though City A is just a little larger.

Buildings A and B are more or less the same height, though Building B is just a few metres higher.

Both Mountains A and B are over 1,000m high, though neither of them is all that high compared with the Alps, for example.

Neither City A nor City B has anything like as many people as City C.

4. Expressing differences

Even though they share a common language, they have very little / nothing in common.

City A is nothing like as large as City B – in fact, City A is about a third the size of City B.

There are nowhere near as many people in City A as in City B – in fact, the population of City B is almost 10 times the size.

City A is a great deal larger than City B – in fact, it's one of the largest cities in the world.

There are a tremendous number of differences between the people in City A and City B – (a good example is) their attitudes, opinions and behaviour are totally different.

There were fewer schools and hospitals 20 years ago, compared to today.

The main / significant difference between the two cities is the climate.

The big difference between people about 20 years ago and today is that their attitudes have greatly changed.

City A is not as big as City B, but in many ways, it is more pleasant to live in. For one thing, you can enjoy the beautiful weather.

❺ Expressing cause-and-effect relationship

1. Nouns indicating causes

The	cause for reason for	higher prices was an increase in demand.

2. Nouns indicating effects

The One	effect consequence result	of an increase in demand is	higher prices.
			to raise / increase prices.

3. Transition signals showing effects

Cause		Effect
The demand has increased.	So, As a result, Because of this, For this reason,	the prices are higher.

4. Adverbial clauses of reasons

Because As Since Now (that)	the demand has increased, the prices are higher.

5. Verbs indicating effects

An increase in demand (often)	causes results in leads to produces	higher prices.

6. Passive forms or prepositions showing causes

Higher prices are (often)	caused by due to because of	an increase in demand.

7. Prepositional phrases or adverbial clauses showing causes

The prices are higher	because of as a result of on account of owing to through		an increase in demand.
	because since as	there is	
	because the demand has increased.		

8. Adverbial clauses indicating causes

When If	there is an increase in demand, (then) prices rise.

Example

- Can you tell me why water pollution is so serious in this city?
  - OK. Actually, there are several causes. For the last few decades, many factories have been built up in the city without realising the possible problems. This has had a number of different effects. Some factories produce and discharge a lot of waste water every day without treatment. Secondly, the ever increasing number of people migrating from the country to the city has been causing a great problem of sewage disposal. As a result of this, the rivers have been heavily polluted, killing the fish and giving off bad smells.

6 Hypothesising

Hypothesising means suggesting a possible explanation for something based on the information you have but without knowing whether the explanation is really true.

Examples

Just imagine if you became a millionaire, how would you feel?

Suppose you came into a lot of money, what would you do?

Just supposing you won the football pools, what would it be like?

What if you were given a chance to study abroad?

If a hypothesis is raised, you have to use your imagination in order to talk about something unreal and its consequences.

You should use starters below in response to this kind of question:

Oh, I suppose I'd ...

Oh, I might ...

Oh, I think I'd ...

Oh, I expect I'd ...

The following sentence patterns may be of great help:

If I had the chance,	I would ...
If I were my parents,	I'd make my children continue their studies for as long as possible / learn foreign languages / do their homework. I'd let them choose their own clothes / cook their own meals / bring their friends home. I wouldn't let them smoke / have a pet mouse / come into the house with boots on.
If I were a teacher,	I'd make my students ... I'd let them ... I wouldn't let them ...
If I were the manager of my country's football team,	I'd make my players ... I'd let them ... I wouldn't let them ...
If I were the manager of a big company,	I'd make my employees ... I'd let them ... I wouldn't let them ...

Examples

If I had been born a member of the opposite sex, my parents would have let me study at school for as long as I like.

If I had followed my parents' advice, I would have continued my further education in the UK.

If I hadn't decided to learn English, I would have chosen computing science as my major.

If I had won the lottery recently, I would have bought a villa by the seaside and a luxurious car.

If I had had more time last week, I would have joined my friends on an expedition to the Himalayas.

Example

(Below is a typical example of an unreal condition in the past and its consequence in the present.)

If there had been no reform and opening to the outside world, Vietnam would be quite different. The economic situation would not be as developed as now; cultural exchange between Vietnam and other countries wouldn't be so active; tourism industry wouldn't be as flourishing as it is now.

7 Speculating

The verb "speculate" in English most nearly means "guess". In the test, you may be asked to guess possible answers to a question about something.

1. Guessing about the future, about an idea, about a situation that is not certain, or about any unknown situation, you can simply use the future tense in English if you have a strong idea.

I (don't)	believe think hope expect guess suppose	so. I can ... I will have to ... I will ... ... to ... to have to ... that ...

Examples

I guess/suppose I will have to find a job first to save some money for my future study.

I expect to have to do a degree first, as it is not very easy to find a job.

I hope I can be accepted by a prestigious university in Britain.

I don't think life there would be more comfortable than what we have here.

I don't expect a multinational company to give me a good pay at first.

2. Speculating on something of the past, you have to use the third-type unreal conditional sentences:

What would you have done if ...?

What might have happened if ...?

How would you have felt if ...?

The following are possible answers:

Oh, I don't know, I suppose I might have ...

Difficult to say, but I think I'd have ...

Well, of course, I could have ...

I would guess that ... is becoming more and more popular because ...

It's hard to say but if I were to guess, I'd say that ... because ...

It probably won't ... in a short period of time.

I'd say it'll probably get better / worse because ...

The following structures are used to talk about situations that were most likely untrue in the past:

may have done

might have done

could have done

Examples

The people in the 17th century must have travelled short distances without airplanes or fast trains or ships.

During the difficulty times, people could have made use of straw to keep them alive as well as warm.

must have done and can have done are used to make a guess that might likely happen in the past.

As there was no advanced machinery, the ancient people must have used some magic power to build this great water works.

8 Arguing

When you are asked to present an argument, you should always look at it from two sides, giving reasons why you agree or disagree before reaching a conclusion. For agreeing, you may point out some "advantages" or "for" ideas; for disagreeing, you may mention "disadvantages" or "against" views:

There are both advantages / positive side and disadvantages / negative side to ...

The main advantage / strength of ... is that ...

The disadvantage / weakness is ...

There are two sides to this issue. On the one hand, ... On the other hand, ...

The benefits of ... are ... but the challenges are ...

Although / While there are obvious advantages to ..., its disadvantages / drawbacks / downside should not be neglected.

In spite of / Despite ..., ...

..., while / whereas ...

Example 1

• Can you describe the advantages and disadvantages of Vietnam's joining the WTO?

Advantages	Disadvantages
More job opportunities	More challenge for the local enterprises
Cheaper goods	Greater foreign influence
Improved quality of goods	English more important
Foreign trade improves the economy.	Changing attitudes

◦ Vietnam's joining the WTO will bring us a lot of advantages. To begin with, more foreign companies and multinational companies will come into Vietnam, offering more job opportunities for the Vietnamese people. But we can see that only the talented and skilled people can benefit a lot from it, which means we have to prepare ourselves very well with knowledge and skills so as to make good use of this opportunity.

As you can see, nowadays, the imported goods such as electrical appliances are very expensive. Many Vietnamese people cannot afford them. If these goods can be produced in Vietnam or localised, the costs will be greatly reduced and the prices will certainly be lower. With the challenge from the foreign companies, the local industry will have to come up with goods of better quality, improved design and reasonable price. So, the general public will surely benefit considerably from this.

I'm sure, too, that foreign trade will be boomed, which will improve the economy. Foreign trade will explore a larger market for its goods.

However, while we enjoy the advantages, I guess there would be lots of disadvantages, too. At the moment, some state-run enterprises are not efficient, and make little profit because their goods are of poor quality. If they want to survive this fierce competition, they'll have to improve their productivity, cut their costs, and invest a lot of money in developing the business. English skills, for obvious reasons, will become more important. As for some people who do not have this skill, they may be very disadvantaged and some will even lose their jobs. Foreign influence will be so great that the traditional Vietnamese culture will be challenged and threatened.

Example 2

• How far do you think human beings should test their new medicine on animals?

For	Against
Realistic tests are necessary.	Animals have rights.
Tests are necessary to find cures.	Not all animal tests are important.
Better that animals suffer than humans	Often computer simulation is possible.

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○ Well, I think there are a lot of good reasons for human beings to carry out tests on animals. For a start, it is very necessary to carry out tests so as to find cures for some diseases. Every year, many lives have been lost through some kind of incurable diseases. As our purpose is to find the cure for the human beings, there is no point in carrying out these tests to put human beings at risk. So, in this case, many people believe that it is better for animals to suffer than human beings.

However, we have to admit that all the creatures on earth are equal. We can't abuse animals to benefit humans as they also have their own rights. As so many pharmaceutical companies want to market their new medicines each year, they should not carry out their toxicology tests on animals at will. I mean there should be some strict regulations for them to follow. They should be forbidden to carry out those unnecessary tests. Besides, it's not necessary to use animals every time as computer simulation is good enough to serve this purpose.

9 Suggesting

Making a suggestion is a commonly-given function in Part 3 of the Speaking test. The most common way to make a suggestion in English is to use either **should** (if you think something is really a good idea) or **could** (if you are just talking about one possible suggestion). You could add the words **maybe** or **perhaps** (more formal) to your suggestion to alleviate it.

To easily communicate your meaning when making a suggestion, and also to show your English ability to the examiner, you can try one of these common expressions:

If I had the power to change things, I would ...

I think what should be done is ...

I think this problem could be solved by + V-ing ...

To solve this problem, I think we should ...

I think they should ...

I was wondering if you'd ever thought of ...

Might it be an idea to ...

Example

• **What do you think the government should do to better preserve the wild animals in your country?**

○ I think, first of all, the government should change the functions of zoos. The animals in captivity live a miserable life while forced to provide entertainment for human beings. Zoos don't fulfil their role of animal conservation, especially in the protection

of some endangered species. Instead, I think zoos should be an education centre for children to observe the nature and be close to life. Or the animals should be allowed to go back to the wilderness. If people want to see them, they should be in cages, just like the wildlife parks or nature reserves in many parts of the world. What's more, if I were in a position to make a decision, I would not allow circus performances. Circus should not exist as animals are often forced to do some tricks to entertain people. I've not been to a circus for ages as I can't stand the scenes of animals being exploited. Another point I'd like to make is that the government should make strict laws to forbid killing animals for food or clothes or medicinal purpose. Finally, the government should invest more money on the animal breeding or research programmes because they play a very important role in saving the endangered species. If we don't want to see any animals die out, the government and the public should join hands to protect them.

10 Discussing probability

Discussing probability of some action that may or may not occur in the future, you can express your level of certainty by tone of voice or using one of the expressions suggested below:

Do you think it will ...?

Yes, definitely.	Of course it'll ... It's sure to ... It's bound to ...
Yes, probably.	I expect it'll ... I wouldn't be surprised if it ... + V-ed I bet it'll ...
Perhaps.	There's a chance it'll ... It might possibly ... I suppose it might ...
No, probably not.	I doubt if it'll ... I don't think it'll ... There's not much chance of it ... + V-ing ...
No, definitely not.	Of course it won't ... There's no chance of it ... + V-ing ... I'm absolutely sure it won't ...

Example

- How will technology help us in the future?
  - Well, I think technology will help us a lot in the future. With technology, we're bound to find some alternative resources to replace our exhausting natural resources. The temperature will definitely be warmer due to the greenhouse effect. But with technological advances we might possibly move underground, living in a nice and cool place. There's a good chance that people can take their holidays by travelling to Mars or other planets.

⓫ Debating

A debate roughly means a discussion between sides with different views. Here in the test, the candidate will speak for or against something intent on persuading the examiner.

Below are some common expressions you may use:

1. Getting started

   There are three / several / a number of points I'd like to make.

   I'd like to begin by saying ...

   I'd like to begin by raising the issue of ...

2. Giving opinions

   I believe / think / feel that ...

   In my opinion / view, ...

3. Partly agreeing

   I'd tend to agree with you on that.

   I agree with you on the whole, but ...

   You may say so, but ...

4. Politely disagreeing

   To a certain extent I agree with you, but ...

   I agree up to a point, but ...

   I wish I could, but ...

5. Disagreeing

   I'm sorry, but I really can't agree with you on that.

   With all due respect, I have to disagree.

6. Politely interrupting

If I may just interrupt you for a moment, I'd like to ...

I don't want to interrupt, but ...

7. Clearing up misunderstanding

I'm afraid there seems to have been a slight misunderstanding.

Perhaps I should make myself clearer by saying ...

V. Concluding

This is the final section of the assessment and will naturally follow on from Part 3. The interviewer will let you know that the interview has come to an end, wish you good luck and say goodbye.

The interviewer will conclude the Speaking test by simply saying something like:

Well, that's the end of your interview. Thank you.

It's been very interesting talking to you.

You can prepare yourself for this phase by becoming familiar with common expressions of leave-taking, noting them and practising responses to them.

Expressions you could use:

Thank you.

Thank you for your time.

It has been very helpful talking to you.

You have been very helpful. Goodbye.

Nice talking to you.

I enjoyed talking with you. Goodbye.

Hope to see you again.

Day 12 Part 3 – Common Topics (1)

I. Education

In Part 3, the examiner may refer to some comments you have previously made in Part 2 to allow the discussion to become more complex. So, your job is to defend your opinion or give a more detailed explanation of an idea you have already mentioned.

To prepare for Part 3, select some of the questions from the lists below. Practise asking questions with a partner. Note that being prepared, however, never means memorising set responses.

Questions you may be asked

How important is education to an individual?

How is education important to a modern economy?

What are the drawbacks of education?

What is the biggest problem of the Vietnamese education system?

How important is a degree in one's life?

Can you explain the pros and cons of exams? What are other possible ways of assessment?

Which is the determining factor in work performance, experience or qualifications?

What are the qualities of a good teacher?

How can illiteracy be eliminated in your country?

Will technology change the way people learn?

What do you see as the major problems in educating children in Vietnam today?

Do you think that the present education system is serving the needs of modern society?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad?

Do you think the present education system is keeping pace with the changes in modern life?

Do you think that the present education system exerts too much pressure on today's children?

What kind of education should be provided for very young children?

How far do you think education can alleviate the social problems in present-day Vietnam?

Are examinations the best way to assess students? What other ways could be used?

The teaching of science in schools

How is science taught in schools today?

Do you think the methods of teaching it could be improved?

If you were in charge of initiating new methods of teaching, what improvements would you like to make?

What about the equipment in schools? Do you think it is adequate?

How far do you think the use of high-tech equipment in schools can really promote the standards?

How important do you think the computer is in education today? Are there any subjects computers cannot teach today?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: What do you think of the education system in Vietnam?

I think we have quite a comprehensive education system, especially the basic education. But it still has some problems. For example, the focus of the teaching is on exams instead of problem-solving, and teachers still use the traditional force-feeding method. So, the students are always busy with their endless homework without any time to play.

Question 2: How important do you think education is to an individual?

I think education is very important to an individual. In my opinion, with education, one can learn a lot of knowledge, which can enrich one's life.

From my personal experience, in the course of learning, I discovered many new things, for example, learn to do my own learning, how to train my critical thinking skills. One thing which is really important to me is that I discovered my potential, that means, what I am really good at. With this understanding, I could put my potential into full play and realise my dream and my ambitions.

As you know, knowledge is so important in modern society. Actually, knowledge is power. With education, I improved myself in the quality of life, giving myself a chance to go out of the remote mountain village to receive higher education in this capital city of Ha Noi, to meet and learn from many people from different cultural background. Now, I feel so lucky to have received the education that I'm able to live a colourful and fulfilling life.

Question 3: How important are the roles of theory and practice in your discipline?

In my discipline, theory and practice are equally important. Having a strong background in theory, you will be able to analyse and design new and big software. On the other hand, having sound practical experience will enable you to have new ideas realised, then you can transform your ideas into products very rapidly and establish your business within a short period.

Question 4: What do you think are the major problems in the Vietnamese education system?

I think the main problem is the teaching approaches in Vietnam. The majority of teachers and students work for exams in schools nowadays in Vietnam. As you know, Vietnam basically has an exam-oriented education system, with force-feeding approaches dominating. So, some students are very good at memorising facts but what they really need is creativity, imagination and originality. But actually some improvements are being made gradually. For example, in some good schools, quality teaching is being practised, which means that the students are learning to be independent with practical problem-solving skills.

Question 5: How important do you think the computer is in education today? Are there any subjects computers cannot teach today?

Computers can't possibly replace human teachers although there are some subjects in which a computer can be used successfully to teach, especially elementary mathematics and elementary language learning. In fact, any area which requires a student to memorise basic facts through repetition is well suited to computer learning. The computer can be programmed to provide an endless number of simple questions, and as the student answers these questions the facts are learned and reinforced. However, in the learning and practice of more complex ideas, the computer is not adequate. A computer can evaluate an answer as right or wrong, but it cannot determine why. It cannot find out why a student is making mistakes, and then represent important concepts in a different way so the student will understand. So you see, while computers may be useful as a tool for practising simple skills, they cannot monitor a student's grasp of concepts, nor evaluate a student's reasoning. It will certainly be used only as a tool, not a substitute for human nature.

Question 6: Which do you think is the best university in Vietnam?

I suppose the National University is. For one thing, it is a prestigious comprehensive university with worldwide reputation. It has been my dream to go to the National University since I was a child. For another, a lot of famous statesmen and scholars used to study or teach there.

Question 7: What do you think are the best qualities a good teacher should have?

Well, it's an interesting question. I think a good teacher should have several qualities. First of all, he should love and dedicate himself to his teaching and he should be responsible for his students. He should be very patient with them and always ready to listen to them and help them solve their problems in their studies. Of course, he should be open-minded and knowledgeable in his field. And a good voice is also very important for him to make a clear speech in front of his students.

II. Advertising

Questions you may be asked

Describe the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards advertisements.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of advertisements?

Do advertisements create a need that otherwise wouldn't exist?

What products are advertised a lot on TV in Vietnam?

How far do people in your country believe in ads?

To what extent can advertisements help the producers sell their products?

How important are ads in your society?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Describe the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards advertisements.

I think we take a positive attitude towards advertisements. Nowadays, you just can't imagine how imaginative those advertising people are. All the colour schemes, imagination and creation attract so much attention. But when choosing any goods, we really don't only look at the advertisements; instead, we look at the quality, service, price and even the social record of this company. But of course I have to admit some creative and colourful advertisements have really attracted some young consumers. Whenever they look at an item, they have an obvious association with the advertisement.

Question 2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of advertisements?

In my opinion, advertisements are an important part of our daily life. Whether you like them or not, they are there all around you: in the streets, in the newspapers, on TV and the Internet, actually everywhere. Advertisements keep the consumers informed as to what are there to choose from while they help the manufacturers to publicise their products. Also, when the producers run their advertisements in the media, we don't need to pay so much money to enjoy the papers and TV or radio programmes. However, some advertisements may not be objective. On the contrary, they try to sound more encouraging and persuasive than the goods can guarantee. Sometimes, they create a need that otherwise wouldn't exist. But on the whole, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Question 3: Do advertisements create a need that otherwise wouldn't exist?

Well, yes, to some extent. Nowadays, consumers are more sensible than they used to be. Compared with five years ago, consumers would blindly accept what the ads said and might rush to get what was on sale. The result would be that there were a lot of unwanted goods in the cupboards while they found it still unable to resist the cheap items. But now it is different. They would take the ads into consideration and then compare the quality and price. They won't buy anything unless they really need them.

III. Marriage

Questions you may be asked

Can you tell me something about marriage customs in Vietnam?

Are there any differences between the ways marriages are celebrated in different areas of Vietnam?

Do you see any changes in the pattern of marriages in Vietnam today?

Do you think things are likely to change in the future?

What changes do you foresee in the future?

Do you think that Western values have any influence on the Vietnamese view of marriage?

Why is divorce rate increasing so rapidly? Is it a problem?

In your opinion, is it acceptable for two young people to live together without getting married?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: How has marriage changed in Vietnam?

Well, a few decades ago, the marriage of young people used to be arranged by their parents with emphasis on the family background instead of the feelings of the young. But now, they can marry someone they really love without too much focus on one's background. Nowadays, many young people just live together without getting married. Then, if things get bad, they don't have to get divorced and hire lawyers and sue each other.

Question 2: What attitude do the Vietnamese people take towards divorce?

As you can see, the divorce rate has been on the increase recently in Vietnam. People now take an objective attitude towards divorce, but decades ago, being divorced means the end of the world for the woman, who was always the victim, because people would not sympathise with her, instead they put all the blame on her. You can imagine the divorced woman would live a miserable life ever since. Now things are very different. Many wives actually ask for a divorce if they are not happy with the marriage. More often than not, some couples tend to divorce when love is lost in the daily routines. Well, the worst part of the divorce is the impact on the children.

Question 3: What is the role of women in Vietnam?

Well, women are playing an ever increasingly important role in our life. They can receive as much education and have the same access to job opportunities as men. Their contribution to the society is as important as, if not more than, men. They work in all walks of life, enjoying equality with men. But they have one more important role to play: to give birth to and to raise babies. Apart from their improved social status, they are more economically independent at home. After getting married, some wives have become economically dependent upon their husbands while others pursue their careers instead of taking care of the household chores.

Question 4: What do you think of the family life in Vietnam?

Well, as the saying goes, happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. In Vietnam, we still carry on the tradition of reunion with the family during the festival time, for example, the Moon Festival and the Tet Holiday. Wherever you are, you will manage to be back with your family members. But it has to be admitted that with the change of family style and the great variety of entertainment, people work far from home and the relationship is not as close as before. But we still admire those big and happy families.

IV. Family

Questions you may be asked

Do you agree that women should stay at home and look after the family and household?

Are there any other major influences on family life in Vietnam today?

How is family life different from what you experienced in your own upbringing?

How do you see the future of family life in Vietnam?

How far do you consider that Vietnamese social life revolves around the nuclear family?

What changes do you foresee in the future?

Overpopulation is a global problem, which is threatening the world today. Is there any other way to reduce the growth of population apart from birth control policy?

Some young people prefer a DINK family. What do you think of this family structure?

What do you think are the main problems of family life in Vietnam these days?

Should there be a better welfare system to care for old people? Why / Why not?

Is it difficult to bring up children in Vietnam today? Why / Why not? What are the difficulties?

What do you think is the best way to bring up children?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the only child in a family?

What will happen when people get old?

Do you consider the one-child policy to be wholly desirable / wholly effective?

What are the problems it raises? And how do you think those problems can be dealt with?

Do you see some drawbacks of the one-child policy in your own family?

How do parents try to compensate for those problems?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Should there be any rules for children?

Yes, I think so, because proper rules and regulations help the child to become a law-abiding citizen, easy to fit into any social or working environment when he grows up. But too many strict rules will deprive children of their imagination, livelihood and creativity. So, we should be lax when they are very young, say, about 1 or 2 years old. And it's important for parents to set good examples for children in terms of moral values and social responsibilities.

Question 2: What is the biggest problem Vietnam faces?

I think population explosion is the biggest problem in Vietnam. We have more than eighty million people. It causes a series of social problems, such as unemployment, social instability, and so on. But hopefully, with the "one couple, one child or two children" recommendation, the situation has been improved.

Question 3: What are the causes of population explosion in Vietnam?

Overpopulation results from the fact that Vietnam's birth rates are rising while death rates are falling as medical advances have made it possible for people to live longer than before. People still hold the traditional idea that the more children one has, the happier he will be in the future.

Question 4: What are the major results of overpopulation?

I think that if the world's population goes on increasing at the present rate, the world's energy resources will be used up sooner or later. (or: If the population of the earth goes on increasing at its present rate, there will eventually not be enough resources left to sustain life on the planet.) So, all the governments in the world should take active measures to bring the birth rate under control. Overpopulation is the root of unemployment, increasing rubbish, lacking resources, and reduced green land. A lot of Vietnam's problems stem from overpopulation.

Question 5: What do you think of the "one couple, one child" policy in China?

Well, China has the largest population in the world now. This policy may not be ideal when it comes to educating the only child in the family. But there is no other better way. Ever since they implemented this policy, they have seen a great reduction on the birth rate. In this sense, China has made great contribution to the world population control.

Question 6: What do you think of the birth control policy?

Well, it's a practical one. As you know, the world faces the serious problem of overpopulation. This population explosion is even more serious in China. It may not be an ideal policy as far as education is concerned. The only child can easily get spoiled. But you just can't imagine what would happen if China didn't practise birth control. I suppose that's part of China's contribution to the world.

(Well, I think it is necessary to have birth control policy in China even though some people criticise China for lack of so-called human rights. You see, the biggest problem facing the world today is overpopulation. Some people don't realise that by having more children they make it more difficult for themselves and the government in the long run. Experts have long been concerned about the population on earth, which could have reached 11 billion by the year 2075. As China has practised this policy for three decades, the birth control policy has achieved success in China, and the hope is to reach zero population growth with the total number of births equalling the total number of deaths by the year 2010.)

Question 7: Is it easy to implement this policy?

At the beginning, it was quite tough. Some people tried every means to have more children. But the government has done a lot of persuasion work. People now attach more importance to the quality of the children than to the quantity. They make great efforts to bring up their children well physically and psychologically.

Question 8: What is the birth control situation in the cities?

The situation in the urban areas is much better than in the rural areas. The city dwellers are comparatively better educated. They are fully aware of the severity of the population problem in the world. They are happy with one child, either a boy or a girl.

Question 9: What is the situation in the rural areas in Vietnam?

Well, I've heard that it was a problem in the countryside, where people used to think only boys could carry on family trees and be the main labour force. So, if their first-born was a girl, they would keep trying for a son. But by educating these people, we can see that the work of family planning is going much better in the countryside nowadays.

Question 10: Apart from the one-child or two-children recommendation, are there any other measures to reduce the population?

More men and women are waiting longer to get married and are using birth control devices and methods to prevent or delay pregnancy. Well, of course, some people delay having children, because they're making great efforts to achieve self-fulfilment first.

Question 11: What difficulties do Vietnamese farmers have concerning their old age?

Until now, there has been no retirement insurance for the farmers. They have to make sure that their children can support them in their old age. That's why they want as many children as possible, especially sons.

Question 12: What do you think can be done to solve this problem?

As a matter of fact, the government can set up a good insurance system to safeguard the lives of the unemployed and the retired, especially in their old age.

V. Sports

Questions you may be asked

How far do you think sport is a way of keeping healthy as opposed to entertainment?
What are the most common sports in your country?
How important is sport to a person?
What is more important – taking part or winning?
What do you think of the use of drugs to make a person compete better?
What role does patriotism play in international sports games?
How important is patriotism in international games?
What is your opinion about indoor and outdoor activities?
To what extent do you think sports stars should get high income?
Should dangerous sports be banned? Why / Why not?
Should the government support large-scale sports games?
Should tobacco industry sponsor sports games? Why / Why not?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: How important is sport to a person?

I think sports play an important part in our daily life. As we know, in modern society, we're living in a very competitive world under great pressure. It is very important for us to keep physically and mentally healthy. Playing sports can be a good way to release pressure and maintain fitness. And some people also take it as a way of entertainment. You see, a growing keeping fit fever is sweeping over Vietnam; and people start their day with jogging, doing morning exercises or aerobic exercises, and some people are now flocking to exercise in fitness centres.

Question 2: What do you think are the major problems in sports?

Well, I think doping and extreme patriotism. In sports, we should attach great importance to fair play and international friendship, but with doping, everything has changed and the harmful results for the sportsmen are even more staggering. So, it is imperative for all sports people and Olympic people that we have to join our hands together to wage a concerted fight against doping. When it comes to patriotism, it is understandable that everyone loves his country. But when it goes to extremes, it can be terrible. A good case in point is the football gangsters. Thus, hostility may arise between the competing countries.

Question 3: What is more important, to win or to participate?

Well, everyone wants to win in sports. With this ambition in mind, one can perform better. It is also a good opportunity for the sportsmen to challenge themselves, to realise a long-cherished dream and to achieve self-fulfilment. But there is only one champion in most of the events. They have to live with the fact that not everyone can win. The fact that one is able to participate shows that he or she has outdone many others. It is a good opportunity to test your perseverance, persistence and courage.

Question 4: How have the Vietnamese people changed their attitudes towards keeping healthy?

Question 5: Compared with 20 years ago, have the Vietnamese people changed their attitudes towards sports?

Yes. People have changed their attitudes towards sports. Nowadays, we have more spectators than ever to watch the games. Above all, more and more people participate in sports themselves. With the improvement of living standards, people are threatened by all kinds of diseases. So, they have realised that exercises or sports are an effective solution to the problem. A growing number of men and women are turning to exercises around retirement age.

Question 6: Should dangerous sports such as boxing, bullfighting, and wrestling be banned by law?

Yes, I think so. So many people die each year when engaged in dangerous sports. A few years ago, many Chinese were shocked when they learned that some students from Peking University died in their mountain climbing.

(No, I don't think so. People have their own rights to choose what kind of sports they'd like to take. But it is necessary to inform these people of the dangers of these sports. Before they set off, they should take careful precautions against any possible dangers.)

Day 13 Part 3 – Common Topics (2)

VI. Television

Questions you may be asked

Can you talk about the advantages and disadvantages of TV?
What are the major functions of TV?
Should a child's viewing be limited?
How can we stop violence on TV?
Had there been no introduction of TV sets, what would it be like today?
Should there be more control on TV or should there be less restriction?
What do you think of the use of TV in the classrooms?
Will any other form of entertainment replace TV in the future?
What do you think of the future of TV?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Can you talk about the advantages and disadvantages of TV?

I think the introduction of TV last century is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it has brought us a lot of advantages because TV can bring us information, entertainment and education. On the other hand, watching TV has become so popular an activity at home that family members fail to communicate with each other; students are strongly influenced by some of the violent and pornographic programmes. I just can't imagine what the world would be like if there was no TV. We're now so much dependent on TV for information, current affairs, entertainment, education, and so on. But I think its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The fault is not with the TV itself but with the people who use it.

(As I see it, TV is doing more harm than good. I admit that it provides a lot of information and entertainment, but see the result it has brought about: high divorce rates, increasing cases of crime, juvenile delinquency, mental problems, just because of failure to communicate with each other. So, I get my news from newspapers and radio, which at least involves your imagination.)

Question 2: Should there be more control on TV or should there be less restriction?

I believe there should be some censorship on the programmes to be shown on TV. You see, TV has become the most popular form of media. The majority of people get their news and entertainment from it without questioning its validity. They believe in what are presented on TV. But if you look at the programmes, you can easily find that many programmes contain a lot of violence and pornography. But if you had too strict a control, nobody could enjoy the freedom of speech and the content would be very boring. So, the government has to decide to what extent they should have such restrictions.

Question 3: What do you think of the use of TV in the classrooms?

TV, among many other audio and visual aids, can be used effectively in the classrooms. As we know, these kinds of devices can facilitate the students' better understanding of the contents. But teachers should only use them to illustrate what they are teaching instead of simply giving a TV viewing class.

Question 4: Should a child's viewing be limited?

Yes, I think a child's viewing should be limited. For one thing, too much TV viewing may affect his studies and eyesight. For another, if he got addicted to TV, he wouldn't have much time to do some active sports. Finally, there may be some violence and porno programmes, so the parents should provide some instructions and guidance for the young kids.

Question 5: What do you think of the future of TV?

In the future, more advanced technology will definitely bring about more changes in the hardware of TV, for example, TV will go digital and become more user-friendly. As for the software, I think TV stations will probably have to work harder to come up with better programmes.

VII. News

Questions you may be asked

Where do the Vietnamese people get their news?

Which is more popular, the traditional mass media such as newspapers, TV, radio, or the modern mass media such as the Internet?

Which is more reliable as a source of information, newspaper, TV, radio, or the Internet? Why?

How did people get their news twenty years ago? Have there been a lot of changes in the way you get news in Vietnam?

Are these changes for better or worse?

What are the reading habits of the Vietnamese people?

What are the criteria for a good newspaper or magazine?

What qualities do you think a good journalist should have?

Should there be more restrictions on media or more freedom?

Are we used to bad news? How far should people be given the bad news?

With the development of technology, more and more people can get an easy access to news on the Internet. Do you think the Internet will replace newspapers in the future?

Piracy is a serious problem in Vietnam, especially in the field of publication. What's your opinion?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Where do the Vietnamese people get their news?

Well, there are three main ways people in Vietnam get their news from: television, newspaper, and the Internet. But I think the newspaper is the most popular simply because it is convenient and cheap and everyone can afford it. People nowadays may not be aware of their excessive reliance on the mass media. Take TV as an example. If the TV stations stopped working for one day, many people would just feel so uneasy and wouldn't know what to do. As for me, I don't have time to watch much TV. I watch TV only for the news.

Question 2: Describe a popular newspaper.

My favourite paper is *Tuoi Tre*, which is one of the major papers in our country with a large group of readers. Well, it's a broadsheet newspaper as opposed to what we call a tabloid newspaper. It's a very large newspaper, a multi-section newspaper. The first section,

which is obviously the most important section, is the "News" section. In this section, they have home news, foreign news, and they have some analyses of the major events of the week. The third section, "Business" is a section that is amazingly well read. And there is also the "Classified Advertising" section, in which they have ads for houses, ads for jobs and so on.

Question 3: Piracy is a serious problem in Vietnam, especially in the field of publication. What's your opinion?

Well, it is true that piracy is very serious now. Books are printed before they are officially published and film copies are sold before they are officially released, thus, causing heavy loss for the publisher and the national revenue. Moreover, it's a serious violation of the property law. The Vietnamese government has done a lot of work to crack down piracy, for example, education, stiffer sentencing, precautions, etc. but many people simply ignore all these and have a go due to the huge profit. On the other hand, there's a group of people who like to get pirate copies with cheap price. I think the government should also punish those people who like to get fake copies. Meanwhile, DVD or VCD player producers should produce those sets incompatible with fake copies.

VIII. Shopping

Questions you may be asked

Can you describe the shopping habits of the Vietnamese people?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of Vietnam's joining the WTO? Will it benefit Vietnam and its people? Why do you think so? Will everyone benefit? How will it affect your life?

How has technology changed the way you do shopping in your country?

What do you think of the prospect of e-commerce?

How can consumers protect their rights?

With Vietnam's joining the WTO, many of the international supermarkets have come into Vietnam. What do you think of the impact? What do you think the domestic enterprises should do to meet these challenges?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Describe the shopping habits of the Vietnamese people.

In Vietnam, different people have very different habits in doing their shopping. A large number of people do their shopping in the small stores in their communities where the salesperson and the customer know each other. Some people prefer to go to the large shopping malls where they can have a lot of choices. Usually they will compare the prices first and go to whichever store that offers the lowest price.

Question 2: What do you think of the prospect of e-commerce?

E-commerce is a new kind of business. I think in the near future, it will be more widely used because it is very convenient. With it you don't have to go to a department store and walk around looking for a bargain. Instead, you just sit in front of your computer at home, searching for the information you need, comparing the prices of different stores, and clicking on the item you need. But before we come to that stage, the government has to lay down very strict rules to control and promote e-commerce. Now, we still don't trust this new form of commerce, because some businessmen are not very honest. The quality you get may not match with that of the one on demonstration. And the delivery is not efficient enough.

Question 3: With Vietnam's joining the WTO, many of the international supermarkets have come into Vietnam. What do you think of the impacts? What do you think the domestic enterprises should do to meet these challenges?

It is true that many international companies have come into Vietnam. It is both a challenge and an opportunity for the local business people. If they want to keep their customers, they'll have to upgrade their quality, improve their service and reduce their price. At the same time, they can also learn from the foreign companies in terms of management and promotion.

Question 4: What are the advantages and disadvantages of Vietnam's joining the WTO? Will it benefit Vietnam and its people? Why do you think so? Will everyone benefit? How will it affect your life?

Vietnam's joining the WTO will bring us a lot of advantages. To begin with, more foreign companies and multinational companies will come into Vietnam, offering more job opportunities for the Vietnamese people. But we can see that only the talented and skilled

people can benefit a lot from it, which means we have to prepare ourselves very well with knowledge and skills so as to make good use of this opportunity.

As you can see, nowadays, the imported goods such as electrical appliances are very expensive. Many Vietnamese people cannot afford them. If these goods can be produced in Vietnam or localised, the costs will be greatly reduced and the prices will certainly be lower. With the challenge from the foreign companies, the local industry will have to come up with goods with better quality, improved design, and reasonable price. So, the general public will surely benefit considerably from this.

I'm sure, too, that foreign trade will be boomed, which will improve the economy. Foreign trade will explore a larger market for its goods.

However, while we enjoy the advantages, I guess there would be lots of disadvantages, too. At the moment, some state-run companies are not efficient, and make little profit because their goods are of poor quality. If they want to survive this fierce competition, they'll have to improve their productivity, cut their costs, and invest a lot of money in developing the business. English skills, for obvious reasons, will become more important. As for some people who do not have this skill, they may be very disadvantaged and some will even lose their jobs. Foreign influence will be so great that the traditional Vietnamese culture will be challenged and threatened.

IX. Environmental Protection

Questions you may be asked

What are the major causes of pollution in this country?

What is the most serious problem: air, water or noise pollution?

How can pollution be effectively stopped?

Has the government taken any measures to stop pollution?

How is environment important to people?

Pollution is the by-product of industry. Which is more important, developing industry or curbing pollution?

How have people in your country realised this issue and taken measures to protect the environment?

Should people be encouraged to use or stop using disposable materials?

Will this change in the future?

How will technology help us deal with pollution problems?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: What are the major causes and consequences of pollution in this country?

In my opinion, there are several causes for this. First of all, we have established a lot of factories, which prove to be the roots of pollution. The pollution in some areas has reached such a level that it has caused serious social and economic consequences. According to related data, the death rate from lung cancer in urban areas is increasing annually. In the past few years, the economic losses arising from the flood to deforestation have caused a lot damage to our country. So, we should correctly handle the relationship between the environment and development during economic operations, never sacrificing the environment to short-term economic growth.

Question 2: What are the major environmental hazards in your country?

Well, there are several hazards which we should not neglect. First of all, some people have not realised the importance of environmental protection. They just ignore the sign "Keep off the grass" and play on the newly planted grass or just throw their rubbish away on the street. Due to water pollution caused by industrial waste, more and more fish have died in recent years. In winter, air pollution is so serious that many flights are cancelled or delayed due to the thick fog, or smog. Many farmers in this area are burning straw in the fields. The smoke mixed with fog simply makes the runway invisible. The earth is becoming warmer and warmer because of the excessive use of fossil fuels. In many less developed areas, water supplies will become increasingly erratic by 2050 as a result of extensive deforestation. Finally, the greenhouse effect caused by carbon dioxide increase has become a grave environmental problem and is attracting more and more attention in the world.

Question 3: What has the Vietnamese government done to improve the situation?

Well, the government has taken some effective measures to improve our living environment. In order to preserve water and soil and to improve the ecological environment, people are taking the opportunity of the Great Western Development Programme to push forward the programmes of returning the cultivated land to forest or pasture, and natural forest protection. The Vietnamese government has also made great efforts to stop severe soil erosion, for example, the afforestation programme in the upper reaches of the Red River and upper and middle reaches of the Mekong Delta Rivers. The Vietnamese government is making great efforts to protect the environment. You can see a lot of changes in this city. The municipal government has financed a lot of programmes to beautify the

city. You can also feel the changes in the city centre where there is more greenery and planting than before, as the government has also raised the awareness of the public of the importance of planting more trees and grass.

Question 4: What else can the government do to protect the environment?

First of all, as one of the principal parts of terrestrial ecosystems and as a fundamental resource for human existence, forests are of great ecological value. And forests provide habitats for a variety of life on Earth, improve human living space and conserve biodiversity. A very effective method of environmental protection is to raise the utilisation rate of energy and to change the energy consumption structure. To protect biodiversity, Vietnam will expand the areas of natural reserves and strengthen their management and control of rare species of wildlife and plants. Many countries are now trying to save the endangered animals from extinction.

Question 5: What should the individual do to help protect the environment?

I think everyone should contribute to environmental protection. The earth we abuse and the living things we kill will, in the end, take their revenge; by exploiting the present, we are diminishing our future. So, we should use sustainable and biodegradable materials instead of disposable materials, and avoid using fossil fuel, which can cause damage to our environment. Finally, we should increase people's awareness of environmental protection.

Question 6: Global warming has become a popular topic nowadays. What do you know about it?

Well, I'm not an expert on this, but I have heard quite a lot of such discussion from TV programmes and other people's talking. I think it was mainly caused by the waste gases exhausted from chemical factories and vehicles. It is said that the ice caps of the north and south poles will be melted and the sea level will be raised. As a result, some seaside cities and small islands will be covered by sea water.

Question 7: How do you think global warming can be prevented?

Well, there is no easy solution. As far as I know, global warming is caused by the greenhouse effect, which results from too much carbon dioxide in the air. I think that the government should take care of the transportation system. Besides, we should try to replace fossil fuel with new, clean energy resources.

Question 4: Can you just briefly tell me how you think Vietnamese food is different from that of other countries?

Well, I'm afraid I don't know much about how people in other countries cook as I have never been abroad. But as far as the cooking techniques are concerned, Vietnamese people tend to use stir-fry or quick-fry method while people from other countries like to have their vegetables or meat either steamed or boiled. Another difference is that they use cheese a lot while many Vietnamese people find it too greasy. Another very obvious difference is that Vietnamese people like to have their beef well done while people from other countries may like it rare or medium. You can also find some difference in the ingredients people have in Vietnam where they eat things like chicken or duck wings, necks, feet, intestines or liver, while other people find them disgusting.

Question 5: Has the diet or eating habit of the Vietnamese people changed in the last 30 or 40 years, or is it still much the same?

Yes, our diet habit has changed a lot like with almost everything else. They go to the Western restaurant or ethnic restaurants to taste some exotic food now and then. As we have more varieties to choose from, many young people often go to the Western fast food places. There is actually a fast food craze in Vietnam. Another change we can find is that people have changed the traditional diet habit such as the age-long practice of eating a big feast with pork, beef, mutton, fish, etc. during the holidays or festivals. Now, they prefer to keep a balanced diet, eating green food free of pollution, paying more attention to nutrition or the quality of food rather than quantity. What is worth mentioning is that people nowadays can prepare, at home, those dishes that were once thought to be luxury ones instead of just having simple rice and vegetable dishes as they used to do.

Question 6: How do the Vietnamese people keep healthy? What are the most common ways?

Well, the Vietnamese people keep healthy by keeping a balanced diet, taking regular exercise and avoiding stress. Take food as an example. They have changed the traditional diet habit from very heavy and spicy food to health food. They pay more attention to nutrition, protein, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins. So, health food is gaining popularity as people begin to think more seriously about their physical well-being. They have also changed their way of cooking, from deep-frying to stir-frying or just eat it raw as they know some vitamins can be lost as a result of cooking. A regular daily intake of vitamins is necessary.

Day 14 Part 3 – Common Topics (3)

XI. Career and Work

Questions you may be asked

Has technology changed a lot the way people work? Are these changes all positive?

Would people in your country prefer working at home without the trouble of travelling to work over long distances every day?

Many farmers now give up farming to leave for the cities in hope of earning more money. Do you think it is a good phenomenon? Why / Why not?

Can you compare the working conditions of today with those 20 years ago?

What do you think the future work will be like?

What are the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards academic degrees in employment?

What is the relationship between degree and performance in work?

What factors can contribute to job satisfaction / dissatisfaction?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Has technology changed a lot the way people work? Are these changes all positive?

Yes, I think so. Technology has brought both advantages and disadvantages. With technology, our lifestyle has changed greatly. Now, we have TV, washing machine, telecommunication, airplane, etc. But the disadvantages should not be neglected. Planes have also been used in wars to kill people. While nuclear plant has brought us cheap and clean power, its leak has brought us a lot of serious consequences, for example, nuclear radiation.

Question 2: What impact does automation have on people's lives?

Automation in the factories has led to the lay-off of many workers. Many people complain about the invention of computers as the cause of their unemployment. I don't think it's fair enough. It's true that automation has reduced the number of workers needed for a job, but at the same time, it is also creating new jobs in IT industry and many other related fields.

Question 3: What should the laid-off people do to be re-employed?

Being laid off does not mean the end of the world. As long as they are trained for some new skills, there's a very good chance that they will be employed again.

Question 4: Is there any difference between the old and the young in terms of preference for jobs?

Certainly there is. Basically, young people like to have more challenging jobs with more opportunities for promotion, pay raise, in-service training and room for self-development. They are more concerned about job satisfaction. If they are happy, they can stick to a job for a longer period of time; if not, they will quit. However, many aged people still prefer to find a job in the government or in the state-run enterprises as they can hope for stability and long-term security and pension after retirement. The reason is that the young usually have the types of skills required in the new millennium, for example, computer, foreign language and driving, while the elderly people are not adequately prepared.

Question 5: What do you think of brain drain in Vietnam?

Nowadays, in Vietnam, there is a serious problem of brain drain. Those talents with high degrees and rich experiences either engage in frequent job-hopping to some foreign companies or immigrate to other countries. But I think it's a good phenomenon. First of all, Vietnam has a large population. Every year, we have so many graduates and there is more supply than demand. Another reason is that one should find a place where he can put his talent to a full play. Finally, it is both beneficial for the government and the individual in the long run. Those talents who immigrate to other countries can learn some advanced science and technology and management skills. They may even start their own business later on.

Question 6: How have working conditions changed in Vietnam recently?

Nowadays, the working conditions are much better than those 20 or 30 years ago. People used to work in very poor conditions without air conditioning or modern office equipment such as photocopiers or computers. Of course, there wasn't any then. But now, we have everything from fax machines to the Internet. We don't have much paperwork. We have got very easy access to a large amount of information and we can even work at home and communicate with our colleagues by using e-mail.

XII. Social Problems

❶ Equality

Questions you may be asked

What role do you think women are playing in the economic development?

How far do you think women have equal access to jobs with men in modern society?

Can women enjoy the rights in the workplace in Vietnam? Why / Why not?

In what way have women improved their social status?

What are the most serious problems for women these days?

Related vocabulary

female	to be economically independent
inferior	to have equal rights with
overloaded	to receive equal treatment
sex discrimination	to share the housework
superior	underpaid

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Is there sex discrimination in Vietnam?

That's an interesting question. I think women in Vietnam enjoy a high status at home and in the society. They go to work as men. With their own income, they are quite independent. We practise equal work, equal pay. But frankly speaking, male graduates find it easier to find a job. And people in the countryside still prefer sons.

Question 2: How can you describe women's conditions in Vietnam?

Well, generally, women enjoy the same rights as men in the city. But in the countryside, things are different. Men still dominate in the family. Women are just attached to their husbands. It is harder for women to get good education or find a good job.

Question 3: What are the causes of sex discrimination?

I think there are some reasons for sex discrimination. But the major ones include the traditional concept of men playing the main role in the family and in the society. Secondly, men are the breadwinners of the family and chief labour force. Last but not least, women are wrongly considered the weaker sex, physically and physiologically.

Question 4: What do you think of the equality between men and women in Vietnam?

I must say that men and women are equal in our society. They have equal opportunity for education and work, and enjoy equal social status, equal work and equal pay. But I have to admit, in some regions, women can't enjoy equal rights with men. There are many male-dominated families where wives have no say in the family.

Question 5: What role do you think women are playing in the economic development?

Actually, women are playing a more and more important role in the world as well as in the family. Even though women have proved repeatedly that they are equal and even superior to men in some fields, in fact, it's very difficult for a woman to be successful both in her career and family life. When a career woman gets married, she has to take time to look after her family, bear and raise the child, and the company has to take in some new people as replacements. When she comes back, she'll find it very difficult to catch up with the others as well as the new changes in her field.

Question 6: Should women stop work and go back home to take care of her family?

No, I don't think so. Some people say that the education of women leads to high rate of unemployment because these educated women compete with men for the limited job opportunities. So, they'd like women to go back home as in the feudal society. It is true that in Vietnam, women used to play a traditional minor role. Here're some sayings: Behind every successful man, there's a woman. And the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. At one time, people thought that a woman without talent was virtuous, so women had no right for education. As a result, most women were illiterate. In some rural areas, widows were not allowed to remarried. In reality, however, if a woman gives up her work and career, she will be very disadvantaged. She will live an empty life and may even be deserted.

Question 7: How far do you think women have equal access to jobs with men in modern society?

Well, I don't think so. According to one recent survey, compared with men who have more managerial and professional work, most women are still clinging to the traditionally "feminine" jobs such as nursing, teaching, and office work. However, a growing number of pioneers are venturing into other fields.

Question 8: What are the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards women in your society?

Well, women are no longer referred to as the inferior sex, but they are physically weaker. And some men think that women just depend too little on cool reasoning and too much on intuition and instinct to arrive at decisions, but I disagree completely. With the development of the Women's Liberation Movement, more and more women have come to realise that, given equal opportunities, they are just as smart as men. If they want to be respected and acknowledged by this competitive world, they have to make ever greater efforts. Women should have self-esteem and gain pride, self-confidence, and independence.

❷ Other social problems

Questions you may be asked

Do you think there is a generation gap between the young and their parents?

What are the significant differences in opinions between the young and the old in your country?

What are the general attitudes towards the generation gap?

How do people in your country deal with the generation gap?

How can the young and their parents get on well with each other?

How different are the young people today from those 20 years ago?

Will this change in the future?

Related vocabulary

attitude
bad manners
behaviour
crime rate
discrimination
gap/discrepancy between the rich and the poor
generation gap
good manners
illiterate
income distribution
juvenile delinquency
lack of communication
moral views
per capita income
pornography
self-centred
sexual harassment
social stability
spoiled
the poverty line
too permissive
unemployment
violence
well behaved

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: What do you think are the major causes of generation gap between the young and their parents?

Well, lack of communication is the major cause. Many youngsters keep their personal problems from their parents. The young are better educated and not so dependent on their parents. They only want to live according to their own abilities and wishes. They don't believe in living the way their parents live, or in choosing a career that would please them more than themselves. Secondly, they have quite different opinions.

Question 2: Can you give an example to illustrate your opinion?

Yes. For example, the young people hold that an unhappy couple should divorce rather than remain together for the sake of the children, whereas the elders say just the opposite. Another example is that parents think that the first duty of a couple is to think of their children's happiness, while the children think they have a duty to themselves.

Question 3: Do you think this is a culture-specific phenomenon?

Well, I don't think this problem is unique in Vietnam. Everywhere in the world, youth's desire for independence from parents has been observed. They are eager to change and need freedom from the rules of their elders to start a new world of their own. This problem is even more serious in the Western countries.

Question 4: What is the most serious problem the Vietnamese parents face?

Definitely, it is the lack of communication between parents and children. Modern information media familiarise the young of today with different cultures. They've been exposed to information from TV, the Internet, newspapers, novels, etc. which adults neither bother to understand nor have any interest in. On the other hand, parents are also to blame. I guess many parents have been too permissive with their child. They've never spanked him and rarely say "no" to him. As the saying goes, spare the rod, spoil the child. Maybe extreme permissiveness does the kids more harm than good. Many parents confess that they find it difficult to communicate with their children about serious questions like drugs, drinking, love, sex, death, or money. They just can't understand why their children admire film stars, rock and pop singers, and even the imaginary cartoon figures. It's very important for the parents to know that when children are grown up, they want to live their own lives.

Question 5: Can you talk about income distribution in Vietnam today?

Well, of course there are a lot of changes going on these days. I think on the one hand, there is some unfairness, because there are so many ways for people to earn money easily, and at the same time, other people work hard all their lives and never enjoy the new prosperity. However, the government has taken some effective measures to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor by imposing taxes, providing subsidies for the poor, etc.

Question 6: Can you tell me something about the problems of industrialisation in Vietnam?

Well, the main problem with the industrialisation that has taken place here in Vietnam in recent decades is that pollution has become so serious everywhere, especially air pollution. As a result, we are suffering from many environmental problems, especially global warming, the greenhouse effect and acid rain. I think the government needs to take effective measures and increase the awareness of the public to protect the environment. We need to spend more money on environmental protection. I think in the future we will have to pay attention to developing clean and safe alternative energy, such as solar energy and nuclear energy.

Question 7: How serious is unemployment in your country?

As Vietnam has a large population, there is always an unemployment problem. In recent years, however, things have been getting worse. Due to the fact that the economic environment is not good, many state-owned companies or enterprises have gone bankrupt or are losing money and therefore have to reduce their workforce. Now, even university graduates cannot find jobs. It is a serious problem for the whole society, and measures should be taken to address it.

Question 8: What's your opinion of the gap between the rich and the poor?

Well, it's quite natural that this gap exists. I don't think you can expect everyone to become rich at the same time. Under the market economy system, it's only natural for the most capable people to make a fortune first. Life is competition after all.

XIII. Travel and Tourism

Questions you may be asked

What are the main means of transport in your city?

What means of transport is most popular with young people in Vietnam?

How has transport changed your city / country?

What are the major causes of traffic jams in your city?

How can these problems be solved?

If you were the authority, which would you give priority, to developing public transport or private cars?

Do you think that building underground transport is an effective way to solve the serious traffic problem?

To what extent do people in your city observe traffic regulations?

To what extent can technology help alleviate the traffic problems in your city?

What do you think of the future of transport in your country?

What are the most popular tourist destinations in your city / country?

How has tourism changed Vietnam / your home town?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of tourism?

How far do you think tourism can improve the understanding between the locals and tourists?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: What are the main means of transport in your city?

The main means of transport is motorbike in this city. Actually, many people prefer to travel by motorbike because it allows them to be more flexible in traffic, especially in traffic jams, a motorbike can usually wend its way forward. Moreover, a motorbike can be stopped and parked anywhere: in front of stores, schools, or restaurants. Last but not least, motorbikes are very economical; they use much less petrol than cars.

(Motorbike is the major means of transport here, as you know. Many people like to travel by motorbike because it's economical and convenient. You don't need a big parking lot to keep your motorbike in. However, the number of private cars keeps increasing and we are facing a very serious problem of traffic jams, especially at rush hours.)

Question 2: Is there requirement for the motorcyclists?

Yes. First of all, if you want to ride a motorbike, there is a minimum age of 18. Secondly, you have to have a licence from the local police station where you can also get your motorbike stamped.

Question 3: Has the government taken any measures to resolve the traffic problems in your city?

Yes, definitely. Actually, the government has widened the roads and more room is given to automobiles. You see, many ring roads are under construction. Special priority lanes have been introduced and flexible working hours have made it possible for citizens to travel between home and work units at different times. It has also planned to build a tube system and a maglev rail system.

Question 4: What are the major causes of road accidents in Vietnam?

Well, I think there are some mental as well as physical reasons for this. For one thing, the number of private cars keeps increasing and the quality of some automobiles is not so good. For another, I think it has something to do with people's mentality. It is true that the government has spent a lot of money improving road conditions, broadening streets and building more expressways, but the accident rate still goes up. One of the major reasons, I think, is that the driving training is not long enough and the test is itself incomprehensive. Secondly, drink-driving is getting worse in Vietnam. In spite of the heavy punishment for drink-driving, people still do it. Moreover, many people still ignore the traffic regulations.

Question 5: How do you think road accidents can be prevented?

The main approach to reducing accidents is through education. If we can teach people the rules of the road, people can observe the traffic rules and regulations to use the roads sensibly, and therefore, there will be fewer accidents. I don't mean just teaching the drivers, but also educating pedestrians, motorcyclists, cyclists, etc. Of course, not all road accidents can be prevented, but there will certainly be a great reduction in accidents just through a bit of education.

XIV. Animals

Questions you may be asked

Have the attitudes of the Vietnamese people towards wildlife changed? In what way?

What is the role of zoos in wildlife preservation?

How important are animals to human beings?

How can wildlife be better protected?

To what extent should humans respect animal rights?

Is it necessary and right to do experiments on animals for some new medicine?

In 50 years' time, will people change their attitudes towards wild animals?

Related vocabulary

animal conservation	jaguar
animal exploitation	lion
animal rights	monkey
animals in captivity	peacock
beast	pet
camel	rabbit
dog	snake
domesticated animal	tiger
elephant	to preserve
endangered species	turtle
giant panda	wildlife
horse	

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: What's the role of zoos in animal conservation?

Well, I think zoos have a very important role to play in this area. Of course, zoos used to be regarded mainly as a show place, providing entertainment for visitors. Now, zoos are very good educational centres for children to learn to be caring and loving. At the same time, zoos should make great efforts to research into and save the endangered species. The major attractive features of the new type of zoos should involve the breeding of such animals as giant pandas, which are in danger of extinction, and a mixed presentation of animals from tropical regions and frigid zones.

(Zoos are different from what they used to be. Now, zoos can serve as an education centre and a research base for breeding animals apart from being an entertainment place.)

Question 2: Is there any improvement in the conservation of giant pandas?

Yes. The scientists have done a lot of work on the breeding of these valuable animals. It is still difficult for them to reproduce naturally. I hope cloning technology can save these endangered species in the future.

Question 3: What do you think of man's exploitation of animals?

I think animals are mistreated by human beings. We exploit animals in bullfighting, cockfighting, horse racing and horse jumping, circuses, hunting, killing for fur, whaling, etc.

Question 4: Is it necessary and right for people to carry out tests on animals?

Well, it's a difficult question. It's true that pharmaceutical companies wishing to introduce a new drug onto the market have to provide scientific evidence of its safety by getting their drug licensed. This requires toxicology testing which entails tests on animals. Some people think wrongly that animals can't feel pain as humans do, but research findings show that animals have feelings like human beings. We are all equal on earth, our shared habitat. I think animals have the same rights as humans.

(Ah, yes. It's better that animals suffer than humans. The list of things that have been achieved through the experiment with animals is almost endless: blood transfusions, cancer drugs, organ transplants, the contraceptive pill, treatments for mental illnesses, intensive care for premature babies, etc.)

XV. Health Care

Questions you may be asked

You must have seen a big improvement in the health services in Vietnam in the last 20/30 years. Can you tell me something about it?

Is medical care the responsibility of the government or the individual?

How are the present health services compared with what you remember as a child?

What do you think have been the major changes in the health services in Vietnam over the last ten or twenty years?

Do you think that society's attitude to health has changed?

Are people better educated nowadays about matters concerning public health?

Do you think the present health services meet the people's needs?

Do you think smoking is harmful to the health and should be banned?

What do you think are the main problems/defects?

What do you think the government should prioritise in its efforts to modernise the health service?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Is health care the responsibility of the government or the individual?

Well, it's an interesting question. Some people argue that the government can no longer afford to undertake such a responsibility to take care of everyone in terms of medical care. Some people abuse their health by heavy drinking or smoking and use up more of the government's money. But I do think the government should look after its people and pay for medical bills, because a nation of healthy people can make a dynamic and powerful change in a country, thus contributing more to the country's development. Of course, they should make some regulations to distinguish who should receive money for their medical care and who should not.

Question 2: How aware do you think people today are of their own health?

People today have a better awareness of health. They know what is good or harmful to their health. As the pressure of life builds up every day, they try very hard to stay in shape. A good case in point is that more and more people have joined fitness clubs to do bodybuilding or exercise.

Question 3: What do you think are the major health hazards in Vietnam?

Well, I think the major ones include smoking, pollution and work pressure. They all contribute to some extent to our health problems. I do think we can do something to solve this problem. Take smoking as an example. Smoking should be forbidden in many public places now. You see, many people have realised the connection between smoking and serious diseases. Actually, smoking is very harmful to the smokers themselves and even worse for the passive smokers. If a pregnant woman smokes heavily, that can be very bad for her baby.

Question 4: How can we stay healthy?

If you want to stay healthy, you should have a balanced diet, take regular exercises and find some good ways to release pressure. That is to say, we should really be trying to avoid as much as possible things like sugar, salt, butter, junk food, etc., and we should eat a lot of the things at the bottom of the Healthy Diet Pyramid, such as vegetables, fruit, bread, etc.

XVI. Crime and Punishment

Questions you may be asked

Is theft a very serious problem in your country?

What are your opinions about capital punishment?

Is capital punishment the only way to deter crimes? Why / Why not?

What is the most effective way of punishing people or deterring criminals?

What are the causes of juvenile delinquency?

How can we solve the problem of juvenile delinquency?

Related vocabulary

administrative law
assassination
bigamy
blackmail
bribery
burglary
capital punishment
case
civil law
corruption
court
criminal law
drug taking
hardened thief
hijacking
intermediate court
judge
judicial system
juvenile delinquency
kidnapping
life imprisonment
murder
pickpocket
pornography
prosecutor
rape
robbery
shoplifting
smuggling
the Supreme People's Court
theft
to accuse somebody of bribery
to appeal to a higher court
to catch somebody red-handed; to catch somebody on the spot
to come under suspicion
to commit a crime
to commit suicide
to find somebody guilty
to sentence somebody to jail

to take into custody	trafficking in women and children
traffic offence	violence
traffic violation	

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Do you think drug trafficking is a serious problem in Vietnam? What are the major consequences?

It's getting more serious than before. I think there are two main consequences. First, it's obviously harmful to people's health. Second, it threatens the social stability of the country because people living on drugs may commit crimes if they are short of money. A lot of crimes are drug related.

Question 2: What do you think are the main consequences of smuggling?

I think there are three main consequences. First, smuggling ruins the national economy. Second, smuggling brings in a lot of fake products which in turn violate consumer rights. Third, it causes a lot of crimes in the field of economy and is one of the main causes of government corruption.

Question 3: Is law and order well kept here?

Yes, this city has a very low crime rate and the inhabitants are proud of being law-abiding citizens.

Question 4: How effective do you think capital punishment is in deterring criminals?

I think it is very effective. In some countries where at one time death penalty was abolished, there was a surge of crime rate. I think that those who are lenient with criminals are unkind to innocent people. We may not kill every criminal but we should kill enough to spread the word: Laws have long arms.

(Some people hold that, with the death penalty, people will not commit murder knowing that the penalty for doing so is death. I don't think so. You see, if some people were inadequately educated or short of income to survive, they would try every means to get hold of somebody else's property instead of working their own way. They would

take their chance if they know, without any money, what is waiting for them is death anyway. So, I do think the only solution to this problem is education and economic development. Moreover, it is illegal to murder, but are we justified in taking away the life of the murderer?)

Question 5: Is it the only way to reduce crime rate?

No, definitely not. Capital punishment is not the only way to deter criminals. It wouldn't do any good if you give severe punishment when crimes are committed. As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure. I think it is more important to develop its economy in a country and raise the income of its citizens. And we should also educate people to observe rules and regulations. In this way, people can consciously stay away from crimes.

XVII. Science and Technology

Questions you may be asked

What are the advantages and disadvantages of technology?

How has people's attitude changed towards technology?

Can traditions and technology coexist?

The development of technology has certainly produced pollution. How far do you agree that we should put priority on environment rather than development?

In what field do you think technology will develop most quickly in 20 years' time?

Will the technology of today be still useful in 50 years' time?

Possible questions and answers

Question 1: Do you think skill requirements will change in the future?

Well, no, I don't think so. It is true that in the future, there will be different requirements specific to different jobs and the three essential skills will become the prerequisite for jobs. With the joining of the WTO, Vietnam will have more multinational companies or foreign companies which will employ a lot of local workforce. A foreign language and computer skill are essential for communication. Similarly, the accelerating pace of life requires people to be on the move, so driving is a skill they must possess. But I do think in the future, English and computer may not be the most popular skills because they are treated as the necessary subjects when they enter school.

Question 2: Have the skills that were traditionally meant for men and women changed?

Oh, yes. Over the years they have changed a lot. Women were traditionally in the field of teaching, nursing, and clerical work,which didn't involve much change or skills while men were engaged in managerial and professional work involving much training, challenge and change. With the one-child or two-children recommendation and equal opportunities for education, many well-educated women have ventured into business and taken up more responsibilities. Meanwhile, many men have entered the once feminine job areas, such as teaching in the kindergarten, nursing and clerical work. And some of them are quite successful. So now, there is no hard and fast distinction between jobs for men and those for women.

Question 3: What equipment do you use frequently at home or at work? How does technology facilitate your work? Would life be better if technology was simpler? Why?

I guess the most useful one is my mobile phone, which I bought about two years ago at 3 million VND. It was a Motorola model, a very good one actually, but now I can get the same one for only about 1.5 million VND. As you know, technology is developing so quickly. The latest models are more sophisticated with more functions and very elegant appearance. But I don't want to change my old phone. It has become part of my life.

I use my mobile phone for communication with my friends and clients every day. When I'm away on business trips or away from the office, my colleagues or clients can reach me for some important information or decisions to make. Nowadays, it's very important and very convenient to have a mobile phone. Although there are so many different functions, for example, you can play games for entertainment or even go online for information, the main function I use it for is to communicate. As a businessman, I have a lot of decisions to make and my phone can keep me well informed.

Question 4: What field in Vietnam has benefited a lot from technology?

Well, I suppose it is the area of communication. Everywhere you go in Vietnam, you can see people talking over the mobile phones. It is no longer a luxury but a necessity. But years ago, or even ten years ago, we couldn't imagine everyone could use a mobile. At that time, only the wealthy people or officials could use the clumsy yet luxurious cell phone. If people wanted to talk to their friend in another city or another country, they had to get a long way to send a telegram or write a letter, which was slow and expensive. With the development of technology, we have the mobile phone, e-mail and fax. A lot of paperwork has been replaced with new technology.

Question 5: What do you think of the advantages and disadvantages that technology has brought us? (What impact does technology have on people and their work?/ What are the benefits and disadvantages of technology?)

I think technology has made our life much easier and more convenient. Just now, I talked about communication, but actually technology is everywhere in our life, for example, the air conditioning and computer that have made our working conditions better, the labour-saving devices in our homes such as washing machine, dishwasher, microwave oven, just to name a few. However, the negative side cannot be neglected. Automation in the factory has rendered so many people jobless, and many people get addicted to computer games. You can't even imagine what would happen when one day an important computer server breaks down!

Question 6: In what field do you think the most technological developments will occur in the future? (What do you think of the future use of technology?)

Well, I'm not so sure, but from what I read in the newspapers or scientific journals, I think in the field of medical science. Now, people have achieved initial success in the DNA programme and are working on the cloning of larger animals. The next step would be to clone human beings. Well, I don't think it is very moral to do this, but why don't we look at this issue from the bright side? You see, we could clone human beings to provide spare parts as some people have advocated. We could replace our worn-out parts with new ones. I'm convinced there will be a lot of breakthroughs in the field of medicine, especially a cure for cancer and AIDS. Then, everyone can enjoy longevity.

Question 7: What do you think of e-commerce/e-business in Vietnam?

E-commerce is developing very quickly in Vietnam. Many people go online these days to get information. Just click and get online and they can order and buy whatever they want, and make payments online, too, so it's easy for them to shop. Everything can be done quickly, and you don't need to go out because your purchase can be delivered if you like.

(Well, doing business online has drawn a lot of attention and passion from the business people. But you just can't do business on the Internet in a vacuum. Instead, Internet commerce needs to be part of a broader e-business strategy.)

Question 8: What are the positive and negative effects that the Internet has brought us?

The Internet has brought us quick and easy access to large amount of information and entertainment, while the disadvantages are that the information may not be reliable, as there is lack of censorship, really, very difficult to control. Sometimes, there may be copyright problems. There is also the problem of violent or pornographic contents, which may be very harmful to innocent children.

Question 9: What use have people made of the Internet?

Well, nowadays, the Internet has been used extensively for its function in publicity. People depend so much on it for information, current affairs, entertainment, communication, education, etc. So that's why people would like to use this modern media for its large volume, high speed, and easy access instead of the traditional media. People have changed traditional ways of getting to know a product. So, the manufacturers also go online, putting their ads on the Internet or starting a home page.

Day 15

Simulated Tests

I. Sample Tests

Sample Test 1 10.MP3

I = Interviewer

C = Candidate

I: Good morning. My name is John. Could you tell me your full name, please?

C: My name is Luo Fanghua.

I: And what can I call you?

C: Just call me Fanghua.

I: And can you tell me where you are from?

C: I'm from Chengdu, this city.

I: Can I see your identification, please?

C: Yes, here it is.

I: That's fine. Now, in the first part, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself. Do you work or are you a student?

C: I'm a student.

I: What subject are you studying?

C: I'm studying Business English.

I: Can you describe your school or university?

C: Ah, yes. My university is the Southwest University of Finance and Economics. It's located in the west part of Chengdu, near the Du Fu Thatched Cottage. My school is not very large, but I think it can be said to be one of the most prestigious universities specialised at economics in China.

I: After you finish your study, what do you plan to do?

C: I plan to continue to get my Master's degree, maybe in a foreign university.

I: How will your subject help you in your future career?

C: Well, I plan to be a teacher in the future. So, I'm studying Business English now. I can get my Master's degree in a foreign country. And later, I'll come back to China to be an English teacher. So, it'll be useful for me to teach my ... ah ... future students.

I: Now, I'd like you to talk a little about visitors to your country. What do you suggest a visitor to your country should see and do?

I: OK. You have one or two minutes. Don't worry if I stop you. Can you start speaking now, please?

C: I'd like to describe a very cute wild animal, that's the giant panda. Yes, giant panda is the symbol of China, and we all like giant pandas very much although it is rather ... ah ... a little fat and it has black eyes. There are two colours in their body ... black and white. I often go to the zoo to visit the giant pandas. And they are ... they are ... ah ... in movement they are very lovely. They roll and play with each other and they eat bamboo. Giant pandas mainly live in forests. They are endangered species, so people try their best to protect them. So, they build some natural reserves to protect them. And Sichuan is a province in which these animals inhabit. So, I think our ... especially Sichuan people should try to do more things to ensure their food, shelter, and also their safety.

I: OK. So we've been talking about a wild animal, and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider general public attitude to wild animals. Could you describe people's attitude to wild animals in China nowadays?

C: Nowadays, people are paying more and more attention to wild animals. Just like people in some foreign countries, the Chinese people are more aware of the endangered species' bad situation now ... bad situation now and they are trying to build some natural reserves such as the panda ... ah ... foundations and they also ... ah ... have pub ... established organisations specialised in protecting those animals, and the government is trying their best to publish some news to attract more attention to them.

I: Do you think more should be done to help protect wildlife?

C: Yes, I think there's much left to be done to protect wildlife. That's ... according to ... according to the national background of China, we don't have much financial aid. What we can do is limited. So, we Chinese people should be more aware, and what can we Chinese people do is tell more people about the importance of protecting wildlife.

I: To protect wildlife, we also need to protect the environment in general. How can the general public help protect the environment?

C: Because there is a lot of pollution now, such as the water pollution, the air pollution, the hazardous waste, and also the ozone air has been destroyed now. So, people should do is ah ... to reduce the pollutants emitted by some factories. And also to ... ah ... when they go to parks, they donate some money and when they have spare time, they can join some campaigns.

I: Do you think that humans exploit animals?

C: Exploit?

I: They use animals. For example, they eat them, use them for animal testing. What do you think about that?

C: I think it is a very wrong deed. I know that in some places, people use animals for profit.

They don't care about animals. They just kill them and sell them and get the money they need. I think it is really inhumane.

I: Do you think that humans have the right to use animals for testing cosmetics, the beauty products?

C: I don't think so. Although they are animals, I think they have the same rights as human beings.

I: Do you think the government in China will ever ban animal testing or are people not interested in those kinds of things?

C: Maybe people are interested in these kinds of things, but they can do nothing because the government should ... need to use these animals although they need human beings. That's impossible.

I: What do you think about keeping animals as pets? In Britain, there are many people who don't feel animals should be kept as pets. What do you think about that?

C: In China, many people keep animal ... animals as pets. Nowadays, because of the very stressful work and life, they just want to keep animals for relaxation and to keep them more happier ... yes ... happier.

I: In Britain, we also say man's best friend is a dog. What do you think about that? Do you think that could be true in some cases?

C: Mm, I agree with that saying, because I think a dog is very trustful. And dogs will never give ... dogs will never forgive you ... Oh, they won't bother you. And I know there are some dogs that can lead blind people, so they are very useful to human beings, and they can help detectives to find the traces of the criminals.

I: So, that's the end of the interview. Goodbye.

C: Thank you for your time. Goodbye.

An IELTS examiner's comments on this candidate's interview

This candidate got 7 points. She might have got a higher score if she could have spoken more fluently. During her test, there were some repetitions and hesitations in her reply. She was not very good in Part 2 of which some lexical items were not properly used. However, she did improve in Part 3: she could express herself fairly clearly; she could use a good range of grammatical forms; but when it came to complicated ideas, her vocabulary items were inaccurate. Her pronunciation was a bit dull, and the rising and falling intonation were not appropriate.

Sample Test 2 11.MP3

I: Good morning. My name is John. Could you tell me your full name, please?

C: My name is Liu Fan.

I: And what shall I call you?

C: Just call me Liu or Louies, my English name.

I: And can you tell me where you're from?

C: Yes. I'm from Ya'an, a medium-sized city in the southwestern part of China.

I: Can I see your identification, please?

C: OK, here it is.

I: That's fine. Now, in the first part, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself. Let's talk about your home town or village. What kind of place is it?

C: Well, my home town is a quiet and peaceful city located on the banks of Qingyi River and surrounded by high mountains. It's rich in natural resources and mineral deposits, especially stone materials, for example, marble and granite.

I: What's the most interesting part of your home town?

C: Well, the most interesting part I think is the Giant Panda Reserve, where they keep a lot of giant pandas. Actually, the area is the natural habitat of the giant pandas. But in the centre itself, they pick up and treat those which have fallen ill in the wilderness. Many famous people and celebrities have donated to the treatment and conservation of giant pandas.

I: Is there anything you don't like in your home town?

C: Uh, yes. It rains a lot there. As a matter of fact, it's well known as a "Rainy City" where the average annual rainfall can reach 1,200mm. Sometimes, it can get very muddy and cause inconvenience to the local people.

I: How has your home town changed in the past few years?

C: A lot of changes have taken place in my home town recently. A good example is the construction of Chengdu-Ya'an expressway which actually links up the two cities. You can travel back and forth between the two cities very easily, making it an ideal place to live in. It used to take 4 to 5 hours to travel to Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province. As a result, its poor transportation system hindered the economic development. Besides, many high-rise buildings have sprung up along the river.

I: Let's move on to talk about the type of clothes you like. What type of clothes do you wear at work?

C: Well, mostly, I have to wear formal clothes at work, such as a uniform and a suit. There's very strict regulation as to what we should wear at work. But after work, I prefer to wear casual clothes which are more comfortable and relaxing.

I: Is it important for people to wear formal clothes at work?

C: Yes, I think so. By wearing formal clothes, we show respect to our clients. Above all, it's the company's image as people always associate a company with what the staff wears. It also shows that we are serious in dealing with other people.

I: Can we judge a person by what he or she wears?

C: Well, I don't think so. Though many believe that clothes can be a status symbol today, I don't think clothes can mean everything. Some people may like to wear their designer coats, but it doesn't follow that they are wealthy or hold high social positions. It simply means that they can afford this type of clothes. Likewise, some successful or outstanding people may just wear some simple clothes. So, in my opinion, there's no justification whatsoever for judging a person by his appearance only.

I: Should we fall slaves to fashion?

C: Absolutely not. You see, fashions change very quickly. Something that is in style this year may go out of style the next. The fashion industry has been so successful in persuading people to buy new fashionable clothes. However, it's just a kind of art, enriching our lives. Personally, I think it's a waste of time and money.

I: OK. Now I'm going to give you a topic. I'd like you to talk about it for one to two minutes. Before you talk, you can have one minute to think about what you are going to say, and you can make some notes if you wish. Do you understand?

Here is your topic, and here is a pencil and some paper for making notes. I'd like you to describe a piece of useful technology. *(Give the card to candidate)* Here's the card.

Describe a piece of useful technology.

You should say:
what it is
how often you use it
what you use it for

and explain why this piece of technology is so useful to you.

(After 1 minute)

I: OK. You have one or two minutes. Don't worry if I stop you. Can you start speaking now, please?

C: Well, there're a lot of benefits that technology has brought us. But the most useful piece of technology for me is my voice recorder, also known as a recording pen. It is equipped with a microphone and earphones and MP3. It looks like a pen, small, black and grey, a SAMSUNG made in South Korea. It is digital, and it can record for 13.5 hours. It can be used on a lot of occasions: conferences, interviews, and lectures. It can be connected

to a telephone. And it can also be connected with computers to download what has been recorded. Compared with a cassette recorder, it has the advantages of lightweight, long-time recording and easy editing. I bought it 3 years ago, right after I went to university. At that time, I found it difficult to understand some of the lectures, especially English lectures given by some native speakers. Now, I often use it to record some difficult lectures. Whenever I find a lecture too difficult to understand, I will use my voice recorder to record it while paying attention to the lecturer and trying to understand what he or she is saying. After the lecture, I can listen to my voice recorder and then take notes. At other times when I can't go to lectures, I can ask my classmates to record the lectures for me so that I won't miss anything. I have found it a really worthwhile investment.

I: OK, you've told me about a piece of useful technology, and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general topics. You talked about the usefulness of a voice recorder. Do people accept new technology readily?

C: Well, basically, ordinary people accept those which have been proved to be safe and useful. However, there are some people who are more sceptical of new things. For example, not everyone can accept GM food, i.e. genetically modified food or transgenic food.

I: What aspect of technology are the elderly more concerned about?

C: I think the senior may pay more attention to health-related technology, for example, some exercise equipment and some pharmaceutical products which can help them enjoy their longevity.

I: Is there any difference between men and women in their attitudes towards technology?

C: I'm not quite sure about this, but from my personal experience, I think, in general, men take a more positive attitude towards technology and they may accept it more easily. Maybe it's man's nature to try something new. On the other hand, women may not be so active in trying out new technology as that means a lot of change in their life. According to some reports, when the washing machine was invented, some women were slow in accepting it. As a matter of fact, washing machines have set women free from some time-consuming and dreary part of their housework.

I: Do you think that technology has made our life simpler or more difficult?

C: Well, I think technology has certainly made part of our life simpler. For example, with the extensive use of computers, some of the dreary and repeated work can be simplified. We can do data analysis and calculation more efficiently and effectively than before. With the use of the Internet, we can get an easy access to a wide range of information and communication with friends has become so much easier. However, in some respects, our life has been made more difficult. People have become increasingly depend on modern communication, and when there is a problem such as a virus in the system or a crash in the main server, there could be a great mess.

I: Are there any disadvantages modern technology has brought us?

C: Of course, there are. There is no shortage of examples. On the one hand, automobiles have provided mobility for people, accelerating the economic development. On the other hand, they have claimed so many lives in car accidents, and have produced so much pollution every day.

I: You mentioned car accidents. What do you think are the major causes of car accidents and how can they be reduced?

C: Well, I think it rests with people's mentality. You see, nowadays, we have better road conditions, all the highways and expressways, better cars; however, accidents keep rising from overloading, speeding, and drink-driving. Anyway, some people don't care about the lives of other people, nor their own. They don't observe traffic rules and regulations. I think the best way to reduce accidents would be stiffer sentencing as well as heavy fines. Also, we should raise people's awareness to value their lives.

I: Thank you very much. That's the end of the interview. Goodbye.

C: Thank you for your time. Bye.

An IELTS examiner's comments on this candidate's interview

This candidate might get 8 points. She demonstrated a reasonable level of speaking overall. Her fluency was quite good. Her pronunciation was reasonably effective with correct rising and falling intonation.

Her grammar and vocabulary are also good, for she did not make serious errors. She was able to interact with the examiner with ease.

II. IELTS Speaking Practice

Do you have anyone who speaks English to practise with? (You do not need anyone proficient as long as they can read a bit.) Hand him/her a list of speaking questions and have him/her ask you some of these questions at random.

Now, you can use the following sample questions to rehearse for the oral interview. Make sure you can speak correctly, clearly, and with ease and confidence in response to each question. Remember to make your answer interesting by providing more than the most basic information. Some of these sample questions most likely appear on your exam, so review them well.

Instructions for examiners: Please follow the instructions as exactly as possible. They are based on the official British Council information for the new Speaking test.

Part One – Introduction and Interview (4 – 5 minutes)

- Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is ...
- Could you tell me your full name, please?

- And what can I call you?
- Can you tell me where you are from?
- And can I see your identification, please? Thank you, that's fine.
- Now in the first part I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself.

(Interviewer now chooses two or three from the following subject frame depending on time/length of candidate's answers. Occasionally, questions may need to be adjusted slightly or follow-up questions added to elicit more detail, but the frame should be followed as closely as possible.)

1. **Home town (or city or village)**
   - Let's talk about your home town ... What kind of place is it?
   - What's the most interesting part of ...?
     (What do you think are the best and worst things about your home town?)
   - What is the weather like in your home town?
   - How is your home town different from other places?
2. **Shopping**
   - Let's talk about shopping ... Do you often go shopping? Why / Why not?
   - What kind of place do you often shop in?
   - Why do you want to do your shopping there?
   - Would you say it's important for shops or supermarkets to keep regular customers? Why / Why not?
3. **Spare time**
   - Now let's move on to what you do in your spare time. Do you have any hobbies or interests? (What are they / is it?)
   - Are there any hobbies you would like to take up in the future?
   - What are the most popular free-time activities for young people in your country? Why?
   - What are the sports facilities like in your country?
4. **Travelling and transport**
   - Now let's talk a bit about travelling. Do you enjoy travelling?
   - Tell me about the farthest place you have been to?
   - What do you generally like to do when you visit other places?
   - If you could visit any place in the world, where would you go? Why?

5. **Holidays**

- Now I'd like to talk to you a little about holidays in your country. What's the most important holiday in Vietnam?
- What do you usually do?
- How do you celebrate the important occasions in your family?
- What do you think of the influence of Western holidays in Vietnam?

6. **Accommodation**

- Let's move on to talk about accommodation. Tell me about the kind of accommodation you live in.
- How long have you lived there?
- What do you like most about living there?
- What sort of accommodation would you most like to live in?

7. **Clothes**

- Now I'd like you to talk a little about clothes. Tell me what kind of clothes you wear at work.
- What type of clothes do you wear after work?
- What's the most important factor when you decide to buy a coat, price, quality or style? Why?
- Have there been any changes in clothes in Vietnam in the past few decades?

8. **Visitor / tourism**

- Now I'd like you to talk a little about visitors to your country. What do you suggest a visitor to your country should see and do?
- Has tourism changed your country very much?
- What are the main problems / difficulties in the tourism industry in Vietnam?

9. **Food**

- Let's move on to talk about food. Tell me something about your favourite food.
- Who do you like to have meals with at weekends? Why?
- Do you like to cook at home or go to the restaurants on special occasions? Why?
- What do you think of the Western food in Vietnam?

10. **Work / job**

- Do you work or are you a student?
- What does your work involve?
- Can you describe your work environment?

- How would you change or improve it?
- How has work changed over the past 20 years in your country?

11. **Family**

- I'd like to talk about your family, if it's OK. Can you tell me about your parents?
- Who in the family makes most of the decisions? Why?
- Are there many rules for children in your country?
- What are the biggest problems facing families in your country now?

12. **Studies**

- Do you work or are you a student?
- What subjects are you studying?
- Can you describe your school / university?
- After your studies what do you plan to do?
- How will your subject help you in your future career?

  (What are you hoping to do in the future?)

  (What qualification do you need to do that?)

13. **Music**

- Now I'd like you to talk a little about music. What sort of music do you usually listen to?
- Are there any types of music that you don't like?
- Do you think it's good to learn a musical instrument? Why / Why not?
- Where can people in your country go to listen to live music?

Part Two – Individual Long Turn (3 – 4 minutes)

(Interviewer selects topic card.)

- OK, now I'm going to give you a topic. I'd like you to talk about it for one to two minutes. Before you talk, you can have one minute to think about what you are going to say and you can make some notes if you wish. Do you understand?

  Here is your topic, and here is a pencil and some paper for making notes. I'd like you to *(verbally describe topic)*. *(Give the card to candidate)* Here's the card.

  (After 1 minute)
- OK. You have one or two minutes. Don't worry if I stop you. Can you start speaking now, please?

  (Interviewer stops them if necessary and asks one or two follow-up questions based on candidate's output.)

Topic Cards

1.

Describe your ideal evening out.

You should say:
where it would be
who you would be with
what you would do

and explain why this would be so enjoyable for you.

Have you ever done this before?

Do you think other people would enjoy a similar evening?

2.

Describe a famous person you would like to meet.

You should say:
who it is
what they are famous for
what you would do if you meet them

and explain why you would like to meet them.

Do many people know this person?

Would your friends also be interested to meet this person?

3.

Describe a wild animal that can be found in your country.

You should say:
what it looks like
where it lives
what you like/don't like about it

and explain how people in your country generally feel about it.

Have you ever seen one of these animals?

Are they kept in zoos?

4.

Describe a shop or store that you often go to.

You should say:
what it sells
what it looks like
how often you go there

and explain what you like or dislike about it.

Do many people visit the shop?

Is it popular with tourists?

Part Three – Two-way Discussion (4 – 5 minutes)

(Examiner introduces an abstract issue or concept loosely related to the topic in Part Two and leads a discussion around this area with the candidate. The aim is to test candidate's ability to explain ideas and opinions, support arguments, compare, make suggestions and speculate. The examiner must start with the phase 3 topic given below, but examiner's language should be tailored to candidate's level/ability. Examiner should ask appropriate follow-up questions and attempt to push the candidate to their best level.)

Topic 1: A Perfect Evening

We've been talking about *(Part Two topic)*, and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

- Common entertainment places

  Describe, compare (past) and give opinions.
- Home versus public entertainment

  Compare, give opinions and speculate.
- Links between nightlife and crime

  Describe, support opinions and suggest.

Topic 2: A Famous Person

We've been talking about *(Part Two topic)*, and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

- Attitudes to fame

  Describe, compare (countries) and speculate.
- Effects of technology on fame

  Describe and speculate.

- Responsibilities of celebrities

  Give and support opinions.

Topic 3: Wild Animal

We've been talking about *(Part Two topic)*, and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

- Public attitudes to wildlife

  Describe, compare, suggest and/or give opinions.

- Human exploitation of animals

  Describe and give opinions.

- Wildlife preservation

  Suggest and speculate.

Topic 4: Shopping

We've been talking about *(Part Two topic)*, and I'd like to discuss with you one or two more general questions relating to this topic. First, let's consider ...

- Shopping habits in your country

  Describe, compare (past) and speculate.

- Consumerism

  Compare and give opinions.

- International trade and globalisation

  Give opinions and speculate.

(Examiner ends test.)

IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	• speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar • speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features • develops topics fully and appropriately	• uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics • uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately	• uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately • produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech	
8	• speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language • develops topics coherently and appropriately	• uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning • uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skilfully with occasional inaccuracies • uses paraphrase effectively as required	• uses a wide range of structures flexibly • produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors	• is easy to understand throughout, with L1 accent having minimal effect on intelligibility • uses a wide range of phonological features to convey meaning effectively
7	• speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility • may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction	• uses a vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics • uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation with some inappropriate choices • uses paraphrase effectively	• uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility • frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist	

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Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
6	• is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation • uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately	• has a wide enough vocabulary resource to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies • generally paraphrases successfully	• uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility • may make frequent mistakes with complex structures, though these rarely cause comprehension problems	• can be understood throughout, though mispronunciation may occasionally cause momentary strain for the listener
5	• usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may overuse certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems	• manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success	• produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems	
4	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	• is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase	• produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	• produces some acceptable features of English pronunciation but overall control is limited and there can be severe strain for the listener
3	• speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics	• attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions	
2	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	• only produces isolated words or memorised utterances	• cannot produce basic sentence forms	• speech is often unintelligible
1	• no communication possible • no rateable language			
0	• does not attend			

Appendix 2

Categorised Speaking Topics

(Note: "=" means these topics are similar.)

People

A classmate = a best friend = a child you know = a happy person

A family member = an old person who influenced you the most = someone you admire

A good friend

A happy person = a successful person

A person who has influenced you

A person you would like to spend a day with = a successful person = a famous person

A successful person

A character in a TV show or a film = a happy person = a successful person

Describe a child

Describe a colleague = a successful person

Describe a family member

Describe a famous person

Describe a music group or singer in your country = a famous person

Describe your neighbour = your best friend

Describe your parents = family member

Describe your personality and its advantages

Describe your teacher = a friend

Objects

Describe your favourite book

Describe a book you want to write

Describe an invention before computer

Describe a letter or a card

Describe a pet

Describe photography

Describe a product that you bought but was not satisfied with

Describe a traditional Vietnamese dress

Describe a work of art

Describe your favourite advertisement

Describe an animal

Describe a piece of architecture in your home town = a building in your home town

Describe a special piece of clothes or jewellery

Describe an expensive thing you want to buy

Describe a food that you enjoyed

Describe something you want to own in the future = an expensive thing that you want to buy

Describe the best gift = a pet = an expensive thing you want to buy

Describe a machine/piece of equipment that is important to you = a mobile phone or computer

Describe a newspaper or magazine = your favourite book

Describe an interesting room = a favourite room in your home

Describe a toy of yours

Studies, Work, Life

Describe a company you or your relative works in

Describe a game that you've played = favourite sports

Describe a problem you've met in your life (cf. a success in your life)

Describe a thing you are interested in doing in the future = a book you want to write

Describe your favourite way of communication = mobile phone

Describe an artistic skill you wish to learn = writing a book

Describe a small business you want to start

Describe seasons in your home town = climate and weather

Describe an important decision you've made = a change in your life

Describe your ideal job

Describe an industry in your home town

Describe a special meal

Describe your experience in learning a language

Describe pollution in your area

Describe a skill or subject you want to study

Describe something you are good at

Tell me about how you can improve your work or study = advantage of your character

Describe your favourite period of time during a day

Describe a project or work you finished with others

Describe a youth culture in your country = a singer, band or singing group

Describe something you've learned from foreign culture = Eastern wedding and Western wedding

Describe an ambition in your life = an ideal job = an ideal house

Describe one or two bad habits of yours

Places

Describe a hotel in your area

Describe a leisure centre

Describe a swimming pool

Describe a shop

Describe a restaurant

Describe a country you'd like to visit

Describe a place you'd like to go to if you had a lot of money

Describe your school

Describe a place of natural beauty

Describe a historic place

Appendix 3 What You Should Do on the Day of the Test

After all your preparation for the IELTS test, follow these simple suggestions to ensure your test day goes smoothly.

- Plan to arrive early (perhaps half an hour). Then if you have unexpected transport problem or some other delay, you will have extra time to sort them out before the test begins. There is nothing worse than arriving late, upset and flustered, when you need all your mental energy for the exam.
- Don't worry about the parts of the test that are finished. Concentrate fully on the module you have in front of you.
- Use your time carefully. Talk to your friends in English while you are waiting for your interview.
- Do not simply answer the examiner's questions; elaborate on your answers. Talk as much as possible. This is not rude; the examiner needs to hear you talk a lot, so he/she can find out your proficiency level.
- You will find it easier to talk if you have something to say. Use the suggestions given in this book to prepare for the interview. Think about your opinions and your reasons for holding them. Think about your plans and why you have made them. Think of important / funny / exciting things that have happened to you and be ready to talk about them.
- Part 2 of the test requires you to make a presentation. Don't be frustrated by this. Use all the hints on the card you are given, and any other ideas you can think of to make a well-organised and coherent talk.