

IELTS Speaking on the past and history

Speaking Part One-style questions

Ask your partner past questions about themselves on these typical Part One speaking topics:

Work and studies

Hobbies and free time

Festivals and celebrations

Food and drink

Transport and travel

Friends and family

Hometown and accommodation

English studies and IELTS

Match up the questions below to the categories above and ask any questions you haven't yet asked

Where did you live when you were a child?

What was your home where you grew up like?

Where were you born?

Where did you grow up? / Where did you live when you were a child?

What did you do last weekend?

What did you like doing when you were a child?

Did you do much with your leisure time when you were younger?

When was the last time you went out? (What did you do?)

How did you use to travel to school?

Did you use to go abroad on holiday when you were younger?

What did you want to be when you grew up?

What was your favourite subject at school? (What did you like about it?)

Were there any subjects you didn't like? (Why?)

Did you get on well with your parents/ brothers or sisters when you were a child?

When was the last time you met your extended family? What was the occasion?

Did you enjoy English at school?

How did you celebrate your last birthday?

When did you last go to a festival?

Have you visited many foreign countries? What was your favourite place? Why?

Have you ever had any problems while you were travelling?

Have you been to any English speaking countries? (What do you think about it/ them?)

Have you travelled much?

Have you visited any foreign countries?

Where did you use to go on holiday when you were a child?

Share any other questions you thought of with the class

What phrases can you use to talk about the past, e.g. "used to" and "When I was younger"?

Speaking Part Two-style questions

Student A

Your past

Talk about a toy you had when you were a child, saying:

- How old you were when you had it
- How you used to play with it
- How long you had it

And say if you would give the same toy to your own child if he or she was the same age or not, and why

The past

Talk about someone from history you admire. You should mention:

- Where and when they lived
- What their main achievements were
- Why you admire them

And say whether you think there is anyone similar living now or not, and why you think that

Student B

Your past

Describe a school friend you had when you were younger. You should say:

- What that person looked like
- What that person was like
- What that person liked

And say whether you are still friends with that person or not, and why

The past

Talk about a period of history or incident in history that you are particularly interested in. You should describe:

- What it is
- Why it is interesting to you
- How and when you first became interested in it

And say whether there are any present events or trends which are likely to be just as interesting for people in the future or not, and why you have that opinion

Extra Speaking Part Two examples

Talk about the last time your whole family were together.

You should mention:

- Where you were
- What you did
- How long you were together

And say if you think your family will get together again soon or not, and why

Describe a friend that you haven't met for a long time.

You should say:

- Why you haven't seen that person
- Where and when you last met
- What you think that person has been doing since that time

And say whether you think you will meet him or her again in the near future or not, and why

Describe a relative you haven't met for a long time.

You should mention:

- What that person's relationship to you is
- Why you haven't met that person
- Where and when you last met them

And say whether you think you will meet them again soon or not, and why

Describe a friend who has played an important part in your life.

You should say:

- How you met this person
- How long you have known them
- How you spend or used to spend time together

And explain why they have been an important part of your life

Describe a friend you have had or had for a long time

You should say:

- How you first met
- What things you do or did together
- What things you have or had in common

And say why you think your friendship lasted a long time

Talk about a pet you or someone you know used to have. You should mention:

- What it looked like
- What it liked doing
- How it needed to be looked after

And say if you would like to have a similar pet in the future or not, and why

Talk about a job you or someone you know did in the past

You should say:

- What the duties were
- What the work place was like
- What clothes and equipment were needed

And say if you think it was a good job or not, and why

Talk about something you used to use to help you in your past work or studies. You should say:

- What it looked like
- What it was used for
- How often you used this thing

And say if you still use that thing now or not, and why

Describe a classroom that you used to study in.

You should describe:

- What you studied there
- Its position
- The facilities and equipment in it

And say how it compares to other places you have studied

Describe a school that you used to study in

You should say:

- How big it was
- What it looked like
- What the interior was like

And say if you enjoyed studying there or not, and why

Describe a workplace you or someone you know used to work in

You should say:

- What the exterior of the building looked like
- What the interior of the building was like
- What facilities there were in the building and the local area

And say if you would like to study somewhere like that in the future or not, and why

Describe a project you had to do on your own or with others as part of your studies or work

You should say:

- What the purpose of that project was
- What you had to do
- How well the project was completed

And say if you think it would have been easier to complete that project on your own or with other people, and why

Talk about a book, newspaper or magazine you read recently

You should say:

- What kind of publication it was
- Why you decided to read that
- How long it took you to read it

And say if you would like to read something else similar or not, and why

Describe a movie you have seen which you remember well.

You should say:

What kind of movie it is

When and where you saw it

What your favourite part was

And explain why you it made an impression on you

Describe a party that you attended:

You should say:

- Who invited you
- Where you were invited
- What the party was celebrating

And say if took anything with you to the party or not, and why

Talk about a birthday you can remember well.

You should say:

- How you celebrated
- Who you were with
- Why you remember that day

And say how it was different from other birthdays you have had before or since

Describe a traditional festival or celebration in your country. You should say:

- How long people have been celebrating this way
- How it first started
- If the festival or celebration has changed over time

And say if you think this festival or celebration will change in the future or not, and why

Describe a conversation you had recently.

You should say:

- What the topic of the conversation was.
- Who you were speaking to
- How the conversation started

And say whether you would like to spend more time talking about the same topic again or not, and why

Describe something you ate recently.

You should mention:

- Where you ate it
- Why you decided to eat that thing
- When you had previously eaten the same thing

And say if you enjoyed eating that thing or not, and why

Talk about a piece of music that you have heard recently

You should mention

- Where you heard it
- What kind of music it was
- What kind of equipment it was playing on

And say whether the music matched well with your mood and the atmosphere of the place you were or not, and why

Talk about an item of clothing that you don't have any more.

You should say:

- How long you had it
- When you used to wear it
- Why you don't have it anymore

And say how it compares to clothes that you wear nowadays

Talk about a possession that you used to have

You should explain:

- How long you had it
- What you used to use it for
- How often you used to use it

And say whether you would like to buy a similar item of clothing again or not, and why

Talk about somewhere you went on holiday.

You should say:

- How you got there
- What activities you did there
- Who went with you

And say if you would recommend that holiday or not, and why

Talk about one thing you did last weekend.

You should mention:

- Why you did it
- How long it took
- What you had been doing just before that

And say how you would change what you did if you could, and why

Talk about something you did yesterday.

You should mention:

- Where you did it
- How long it took
- What the result was of doing that thing

And say how your day would have changed if you hadn't done that thing, and why

Describe a journey you have been on. You should say

- Where you went
- What kind or kinds of transport you used
- How long the journey took

And say how the transport you used could be improved

Talk about a foreign country you have been to on holiday or business. You should say

- Where that country is
- Why you went to that place
- What things there are to do there

And say whether you think you will go there again in the near future or not, and why

Describe an incident you remember well from when you were very young.

You should mention:

- What happened
- How old you were
- How you reacted

And say why you remember that incident well

Talk about a hobby you had when you were younger but no longer do now:

You should say:

- How long you had that hobby
- Why you liked it
- Why you stopped doing it

And say if you think most young children nowadays would enjoy that hobby or not, and why

Talk about a day trip you have been on.

You should say:

- Where you went
- How you travelled
- Why you chose to go to that place

And say whether you would like to go back to the same place again or not, and why

Talk about a hotel, bread and breakfast, campsite etc. you have stayed in on holiday.

You should say:

- Why you chose that place
- How long you stayed there
- What the good and bad things about it were

And say whether you would like to stay in the same place again, and why

Talk about one method of learning a foreign language you have used.

You should say:

- What you did
- How long you used this method for
- How it compares to other methods of learning a language

And say if you will use that same method in the future or not, and why

Talk about an English language book you have read or used.

You should say:

- Why you bought or used that book
- What you learnt from using it
- If it was difficult or easy to use

And say if you would use a similar book again or not, and why

Describe the first place that you can remember living in

You should say:

- Approximately how old you were when you first started living there
- What you remember best about the place
- If you moved away or not, and why

And say if you remember that as being a good place to live or not, and why

Speaking Part Three-style questions

How is life different for your generation to your parents' and grandparents' generations?

Do you think life is better now than in the past? Why/ why not?

Are people your age in your country usually interested in the past? Why/ why not?

How important do you think it is for people to know the history of the world and their country? What makes you say that?

What is the best way to make history interesting and accessible for children, do you think?

Are museums in your country popular with people of all ages? Why do you think that is?

In your opinion, what could be done to make them more popular?