



HOW TO GET A HIGHER IELTS SCORE BY BUILDING A POSITIVE IMAGE IN THE EXAMINER'S MIND

[A course that will transform your IELTS score](#)

LESSON 1

Author: Stephen Slater
Former IELTS Examiner and Book Author

HELLO AND WELCOME!

This [series of lessons](#) was prepared by Stephen Slater especially for the readers of IELTS-Blog.com. The lessons are brilliant and will do amazing things for your IELTS score if you study and apply what you learn.

Stephen Slater of the Centre for English Language in the University of South Australia has authored several IELTS books (IELTS on Track series, IELTS Success Formula).

In this course Stephen draws on his experience as a former IELTS examiner to explain what may create a positive psychological impression on assessors who may be scoring the Writing and Speaking components of your IELTS test.



WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

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LESSON 1 - How to Create a Positive, Psychological Impression on Your IELTS assessors

Imagine these IELTS test situations:

Situation 1

You are sitting outside the [IELTS interview](#) room. It is hot, the air conditioning is not working properly, the IELTS assessor has already interviewed 10 candidates, and you are number 11. You are tired of waiting; the interviewer is tired too.

Situation 2

Your [IELTS Writing](#) Test paper with your responses on it is at the bottom of a pile of others. There are 20 in the pile. The assessor has just had to spend 30 minutes looking for a parking space.

Situation 3

An IELTS assessor is giving test scores to a candidate they have just interviewed. The assessor is reading the assessment criteria but is still very undecided and is having great difficulty deciding which way to jump on two of the criteria – go up to 7 or leave the scores at 6?

Although the actual IELTS assessment criteria are confidential, the official IELTS website does give some indication of what they contain. What the official IELTS website doesn't contain, however, is any sense of those aspects of a candidate's test performance that have some impact on the assessor psychologically.

In other words, what can candidates do to make an assessor feel more positive towards them? This may be important, because if the assessor is in any serious doubt about your score, the more positive they feel towards you psychologically, the more they may choose the higher score.

Let's try to identify one or two possible, general factors.



IELTS WRITING TEST - TWO GENERAL FACTORS

Handwriting and layout

The first thing the assessor sees is your handwriting. If your writing is difficult to read, has many things crossed out, no paragraphs or punctuation to create a sense of organisation and structure, then immediately the assessor knows that your writing is going to be more challenging to read, and that you have not shown that you value the assessor (your reader), and have not valued the reader-writer relationship.

Maturity of expression and 'voice'

There is a difference between writing simple, clear English and writing English that is too simple. The IELTS test requires writing that reflects a mature way of thinking, so if your writing seems 'babyish', then the assessor can't view it so positively.

What makes writing 'babyish'? Of course, if you don't know many expressions and can't control the grammar very well then this may be part of the problem. Another feature of this babyish writing, however, is writing which is not very precise or with ideas that are not developed enough.

Compare these sentences:

1. People should do less work and spend more time with their family. It is better.

2. It would perhaps improve the quality of family life if people with busy, demanding jobs could find ways to spend more of their non-work time with members of their family, especially with children or elderly parents.

Perhaps it is difficult for you to achieve the level of English grammatical complexity in sentence 2 under the pressure of time in a test, but in IELTS you might try to move your writing in that direction in order to make it seem more mature.

In other words, **try to make your writing contain more detailed and more precise expression of thoughts and ideas**. This precision and evidence of thought are communicated in a psychologically positive way to the assessor, not just because of correct grammar but also **because they reflect an adult way of thinking**, a way that knows that understanding and discussing life issues in the social world is complex rather than simple.

At the same time, **if you can be more detailed and precise, then you create your own written 'voice'**, which means your own unique style of writing. This means that the assessor can feel you as a real individual, not just as another IELTS answer. **This helps to connect the assessor to you**, and creates a significant relationship between reader and writer, which is usually a positive thing.

IELTS SPEAKING TEST - TWO GENERAL POINTS

1. Every meeting between two people creates a relationship

Imagine you are in a coffee shop and a pleasant person at the next table starts to talk to you. You will probably see yourself as equal to that other person – because you are both in a coffee shop and both drinking something. This helps your confidence and helps you to feel in control both of your emotions, and of what you choose to say.

When you enter the [IELTS interview room](#) it's a good idea if you can create that same feeling – **it is a meeting and you have an opportunity to connect with the assessor as a person, at the same time as doing the interview.**

If you connect with the assessor and present as a pleasant, confident adult, rather than as a school student sitting with a teacher, this helps the assessor both to see you positively as an equal, and to relate to you more positively.

You are an equal - not an IELTS victim. Your body language needs to be natural and relaxed, not stiff, you should make eye contact pleasantly and confidently. You can choose to talk at a relaxed speed, rather than too fast. You can try to use intonation to show how you feel about what you are saying – this communicates your personality, your uniqueness.

You might try to find the rhythm and timing of each section of the test and reflect it back to the assessor – this shows the assessor you are cooperating in making their job of getting through the test sections in 11-14 minutes easier, almost like you are the assessor's co-worker. **All these things** communicate your personality and **create a positive social atmosphere. This makes the assessor feel more comfortable psychologically too.**

2. Help the assessor to get a stronger sense of YOU and your personality

In the [IELTS interview](#) there are many opportunities to talk about your own life and culture. Even if the assessor's questions seem a bit mechanical, you can still try to answer them as if they are part of a friendly conversation in which **you are helping the assessor to know you and your country a little better.**

You can be a sort of teacher, a window on your life and culture. This shows confidence and helps you to emerge as a real person, a unique person, not a stereotypical voice of your own language and culture, repeating just a set of ordinary answers.

Just like you, the assessor is hoping to meet a unique and memorable individual, and hoping to get a sense of your uniqueness, even though they are also formally assessing your spoken language. **YOU can help the assessor to see you positively as a person and can help the assessor to feel comfortable with you.** You have some control over the relationship that is created in that situation and can thus influence the psychological wellbeing of the assessor. But, it must feel and be natural, not forced.

To summarise

Life is essentially a social experience. Taking IELTS is part of that social life. Even though it may not seem that way, **you are in brief social relationships with assessors when you do the IELTS Writing and when you are interviewed for the IELTS Speaking test.** It is important for you to manage those relationships as well as you can, in order to influence the assessor's psychology positively, even if this is not officially a component of the stated assessment criteria.

Influencing an assessor positively but genuinely and naturally may lead to better scores when an assessor is in doubt and is weighing up whether to give you a higher or a lower score. If you are viewed by your assessor as a mature, professional adult with a pleasant, natural and unique personality, and as someone who can inform the assessor about interesting things in a careful, precise way then this may leave a positive impression of you, in contrast to some of the other twenty or so candidates with whom the assessor may have interacted that day, and who may have either faded quickly and anonymously away, or worse, left the assessor with a feeling of frustration or irritation.

NEXT TIME, I'll talk about some of the specific things that may influence IELTS assessors when they read and score your answer to the Task 1 report in the IELTS Academic Writing test.