The Ultimate Guide To Passing IELTS
## CONTENTS

### SCORING WEIGHT

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<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>WRITING TASK 1 (General and Academic)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CRITERIA</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An examiner gives you a score (0-9) for each criterion. Your Task 1 score is an average of the 4 criteria scores. Writing Task 1 is worth 1/3 of your total writing score.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range &amp; Accuracy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>WRITING TASK 2</td>
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<td><strong>CRITERIA</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An examiner gives you a score (0-9) for each criterion. Your Task 2 score is an average of the 4 criteria scores. Writing Task 2 is worth 2/3 of your total writing score.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SPEAKING</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>CRITERIA</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Speaking test consists of 3 Sections, and takes between 11-14 minutes. An examiner gives you a score (0-9) for each criterion. Your final Speaking score is an average of the 4 criteria scores.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range &amp; Accuracy, Pronunciation.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>LISTENING</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>LISTENING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Listening section consists of: 4 Sections, 40 Questions, 40 Points, ~30 Minutes</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Band</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>READING</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>GENERAL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Reading section consists of: 3 Sections, 40 Questions, 40 Points with 60 minutes to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Band</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the General IELTS, your Writing Task 1 is a **letter**. You’ll be presented with a situation and have to write a response in the form of an informal, semi-formal or formal letter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORMAL LETTER</th>
<th>SEMI-FORMAL LETTER</th>
<th>FORMAL LETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal Letters</strong> are usually to a friend or someone you know very well. The letter must be written in the correct style with a chatty friendly tone.</td>
<td><strong>Semi-formal letters</strong> are sent to people that you do not know well. They are more polite than an informal letter and are written in a neutral style.</td>
<td><strong>Formal letters</strong> are sent to a person you don’t know. Examples of situations that require formal letters are: complaining about a company’s product or service, requesting information, contacting the local council, or applying for a job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Example question:**  
You have recently started working for a new company.  
Write a letter to an English-speaking friend.  
In your letter:  
• Explain the reasons why you changed jobs.  
• Describe your new job.  
• Tell him/her your other news. | **Example question:**  
You are working for a company. You need to take some time off and want to ask your manager for permission.  
Write a letter to your manager.  
In your letter:  
• Explain why you want to take time off.  
• Give details of the amount of time you need.  
• Suggest how your work could be covered while you are away. | **Example question:**  
On a recent holiday you lost a valuable item. Fortunately, you have travel insurance to cover the costs.  
Write a letter to the manager of your insurance company.  
In your letter:  
• Describe the item you lost.  
• Explain how you lost it.  
• Tell the insurance company what you would like them to do. |

Need writing feedback?  
**GENERAL**

Want more? Read full articles on E2Blog!
If you’re doing the Academic version of the test, in your Task 1, you’re given a graph, table, chart or diagram to describe. Your job is to describe the given charts, including the most important and relevant parts.

TASK TYPES

In the exam you should expect to analyse one or more of the following charts:

- **Line Graph**

  **Muffins Sold Per Day**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Muffins Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Bar Chart**

  **Avg. No. of Dogs per Country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Avg. No. of Dogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>20,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>10,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Pie Chart**

  **Pet Ownership**

  - Dog: 45.0%
  - Cat: 30.0%
  - Rabbit: 16.0%
  - Fish: 5.0%
  - Rodents: 4.0%

- **Mixed Charts**

  **CO2 Emissions per Person (in metric tonnes), 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DO’S AND DON’TS OF ACADEMIC WRITING TASK 1

• Include an overview (describing the main trends, stages or differences)
• Describe the key features; the most significant things you notice
• Use data (if included in the task) in your description

• Don’t describe every single detail
• Don’t use lists or bullet points (make sure you write in full sentences)
• Don’t speculate or make predictions (eg: don’t explain the trends, just describe them!)
• Don’t include irrelevant detail

Maps

1990 NOW

Process/Diagram

Tables

Carbon dioxide (C02) emissions (in billion metric tons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Task 2 is worth 2/3 of your Writing score. You must write at least 250 words and you should spend around 40 minutes on it. You should follow normal essay writing conventions; include an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion, and write in an academic/neutral style. It’s important to read the essay topic carefully and write a full and relevant response. If you miss the question slightly, or write off topic, you’ll lose a stack of points!

LIST OF ESSAY TOPICS

For Writing Task 2 you must be prepared to write about a wide range of topics.

Here is a list of common topics:

- Animals
- Art
- Communication
- Crime
- Culture/Society
- Education
- Entertainment
- Environment
- Family
- Food & Farming
- Global Issues
- Health
- Media
- Money
- Science/Technology
- Space
- Sport
- Transport
- Travel
- Work

QUESTION TYPES

In our IELTS course on E2Language.com, we break the essay questions into 8 types:

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree?
2. What is your opinion?
3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages?
4. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?
5. Discuss both views
6. Discuss both views and give your opinion
7. Discuss the problems and solutions
8. Double question

Book 1:1 E2 Tutorial today!

Be sure to answer all parts of the question!
You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.
Write about the following topic:

As a result of deforestation and illegal hunting, many animal species are becoming endangered and some are even facing extinction.

Do you think it is important to protect animals?

What can be done to deal with this problem?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

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**ESSAY STRUCTURE**

Use this framework to build your essay.

**Introduction:** Neutral background statement about topic
Rewrite the question
Tell reader main idea of Body 1 & 2 and your opinion

**Body Paragraph 1:** Topic sentence
Reason
Example/evidence
Summary

**Body Paragraph 2:** Topic sentence
Reason
Example/evidence
Summary

**Conclusion:** Broad statement about topic
Summary + opinion

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Try using these tips yourself and have your work checked by one of our E2 Experts! Sign up to E2Language today to receive Writing Feedback for your essay!
1. Can I write in capital letters?

In the paper-based test, yes you can. Just be sure that you don’t mix up capitals and lower-case letters randomly. For the computer-delivered test, you should not write in all capitals. Follow normal capitalisation convention.

2. What’s the maximum number of words I can write?

There’s no maximum. We recommend writing under 300 words so that you minimise errors and have plenty of time to edit your work carefully.

3. Should I count my words on test day?

If you think you’re under the word limit, it would better to use that time to write more! While you prepare for the test, make sure you know what 250 words in your handwriting looks and feels like. In computer-delivered IELTS, your word count is on the screen.

4. Can I say “I” in my essay?

Yes! If you’re being asked for your opinion, you should use expressions like, “I think”, “I believe” etc. Remember, part of your score comes from how clearly you express your opinion.

5. Can I invent statistics and research studies in my essay?

Yes. The examiner isn’t going to verify your claims! However, inventing fake statistics isn’t always the best way to support your point though so don’t rely on this strategy. Sometimes a specific example or a detailed description can do a better job than providing an invented statistic.

6. What do I do if I don’t understand the question?

If you really can’t understand the question, this is going to make life very difficult! But if you’re just stuck on a word or two, use the context to try and guess the meaning.

7. What if I don’t know anything about the topic?

The topics are always familiar and do not require specialist knowledge. You’re not expected to be an expert! Just draw on your own knowledge and experience like the instructions tell you. Think about the topic from your unique perspective and you’ll find something.
The IELTS Speaking section consists of three parts and it takes between 11 and 14 minutes. You’re assessed on 4 criteria: your fluency and coherence, lexical resource (vocabulary), grammatical range & accuracy, and pronunciation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>Part 2</th>
<th>Part 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 4-5 minutes</td>
<td>• 3-4 minutes</td>
<td>• 4-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2-3 topics</td>
<td>• 1 minute preparation</td>
<td>• Approximately 5 questions relating to part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Approximately 11 questions</td>
<td>• 2 minutes to talk on a given topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Part 1, questions are personal and simple. The test always starts with 3-4 questions about:

a) where you live
or
b) what you do (for work or study)

Next, there will be 4 more questions on a completely different topic. The questions can be about sport, travel, cooking, TV, mobile phones… anything!

This is followed by 4 final questions on another topic.

In Part 2, the examiner will read some instructions, give you a pen, some paper and a task card or booklet. You will then have 1 minute to read the topic and make notes if you wish.

When the examiner asks you to begin, you should speak for 2 minutes (until you’re asked to stop).

When the examiner stops you, he/she may ask 1 or 2 follow-up questions to finish this section. Just give short answers to these.

In the final part of the test, the examiner will ask you some more questions.

The topics here will always be connected to your Part 2 speech.

Part 3 allows you to discuss more abstract ideas and issues.

So, if your talk was about a favourite teacher, your Part 3 will probably be all about education in general. e.g. What is the best age for children to start school? What qualities does a good teacher need?)
**PART 1**

**Let’s talk about where you’re from.**

Are you from a small town or a big city?

What can people do for fun there?

Do you think you will live there in the future?

**Let’s talk about shopping.**

Do you enjoy shopping?

What was the last thing you bought for yourself?

Do you prefer small stores or big ones?

Have you ever bought something online?

**Let’s talk about languages.**

How many languages do you speak?

How did you first learn English?

Is reading a good way to learn a language?

Would you like to study another language in the future?

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**PART 2**

**Describe a website or app you often use.**

You should say:

- what it is...
- how often you use it...
- why you use it...

and explain whether you would recommend it to others.

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**PART 3**

**Let’s talk about the internet.**

Do you think children these days spend too much time online?

How has the internet had a positive impact on education?

Have there been any negative impacts?

How important is it for governments to monitor online activity?

How do you think the internet will affect communication and relationships in the future?
Tip 1: Extend your answers.

Even if the question is very simple like, ‘Do you like cooking?’, you should always try to extend your answer. Here are 3 ways to do this:

1) **Give reasons and examples:** I don’t mind cooking but it’s not my favourite thing in the world. Actually, I’m not very good at it so that’s probably why. I can’t cook much besides noodles and pasta to tell you the truth.

2) **Compare past and present:** I used to absolutely hate it but I did a short course in cookery after high school and that really awakened a passion in me. These days, I can happily spend all weekend looking at recipes and cooking meals for the week.

3) **Compare yourself with other people:** Most people find cooking a bit of a chore but personally, I love it. I find it really rewarding, especially when I prepare something special for a friend’s birthday or something like that.

Tip 2: Record yourself

When you practice, record yourself on your phone and listen back. Are you speaking machine-gun fast? Or do you sound like a robot? Were your verbs in the right tenses? Use your recording to work on your problem areas.

Tip 3: Use what you know

You’re not expected to be an expert on any topic but it certainly helps if you’ve read or heard something about it before. You can always say something like, ‘Well, I don’t know much about this but I heard a podcast the other day about this topic and the host said that….’
The Listening section of the IELTS test is divided into 4 sections, each with 10 questions so 40 questions in total. The test takes around 30 minutes and if you’re doing paper based IELTS, you get an extra 10 minutes to transfer your answers to an answer sheet.

**SUMMARY OF LISTENING TEST**

There are 4 sections to the IELTS listening test. Each section is about a different topic and gets increasingly more difficult.

**Section 1** is usually an informal dialogue in a social or everyday situation. For example, it could be a conversation about opening a bank account, or someone inquiring about accommodation or a training course.

**Section 2** is usually a non-academic monologue. This could be one person giving information on something such as a guided museum tour, information about a conference or tourist information.

**Section 3** is a discussion (between 2-4 people) related to education/training. This may be a discussion between 2 students and a tutor about a group assignment, or among a group of students talking about a project.

**Section 4** is usually a university-style lecture. This could be related to any academic topic.

**Question Types**

1. Multiple Choice
2. Matching
3. Plan, Map, Diagram, Labelling
4. Form, Note, Table, Flow Chart, Summary completion
5. Sentence Completion
6. Short Answer

**Things to do**

1. Improve your spelling
2. Build your vocabulary
3. Do practice tests
4. Attend IELTS Live Classes
5. Broaden your audio diet (try listening to E2Talks podcast!)
Tip 1: Read the question carefully

You will be given some time to read the questions before each recording is played. Read them very carefully as you will hear each recording only once. As you read, try to predict the answers and highlight key words.

Tip 2: Transfer your notes to the answer sheet

For the paper-based test, as you listen, write your answers in your test booklet and then transfer them at the end of the listening test. You will be given 10 minutes to do this. Be sure to check that you have transferred your answers correctly and remember to check your spelling & grammar. Be sure to answer every question. An incomplete answer sheet means an incomplete score.

Tip 3: Listen out for keywords

Don’t worry if you don’t understand everything you hear. Listen out for the keywords from the questions and focus on what you need to be listening out for.

Tip 4: Don’t look back!

Use every pause in the test to look ahead at the upcoming questions and prepare for them. If you miss a question, don’t dwell on it because you may miss the answer to the next one. Keep moving forward!

Tip 5: Pay attention to word count

Make sure you follow the word count in the instructions of each question. For example, if the instructions say, “write no more than one word” and you write “the train” instead of “train”, your answer will be marked as incorrect.

Tip 6: Give it a go!

There is no negative marking, so you will just get a zero for an incorrect or incomplete answer. This means if you aren’t sure of your answer, there’s no harm in guessing!

Want to improve your listening skills and get some exclusive IELTS insights at the same time? Listen to the E2Talks podcast here!
In the Reading section, you have one hour to answer 40 questions. In Academic IELTS, these questions relate to 3 long texts (700–1000 words each) while in General IELTS, there are 3–4 small texts and 1 long text. The Academic and General sections differ in subject matter but both require the same skills and include the same question types. Specialist knowledge of the subjects covered is not required to successfully answer the questions. You can learn everything you need by reading the text and questions you’re given.

Here is a list of the different tasks you might see in the reading section:

1. MATCHING QUESTIONS

There are 4 different forms of Matching questions. They all involve reading the given text and matching it with a corresponding answer. The 4 different types of Matching questions are:

- Matching Information
- Matching Heading
- Matching Features
- Matching Sentence Endings

2. MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

In this type of question, you need to choose the best answer from four alternatives (A, B, C or D), or the best two answers from five alternatives (A, B, C, D or E), or the best three answers from seven alternatives (A, B, C, D, E, F or G).

3. IDENTIFY QUESTIONS

These questions require you to read statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the text. If there is no information or it’s impossible to know, the answer is Not Given. Yes / No / Not Given questions are similar but the statements are based on the writer’s opinion rather than on facts.

True / False / Not Given
Yes / No / Not Given

4. COMPLETION QUESTIONS

These are similar to traditional gap-fill questions. The instructions will ask you to either select words from the text or to select from a list of answers. Where words have to be taken from the passage, the instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers you should use. e.g. ‘NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage’ or ‘ONE WORD ONLY’.
These are strategies you probably use in your own language and you definitely need to use them in IELTS Reading because you have a LOT of text to deal with and not much time to answer the 40 questions.

### SKIMMING

**Why skim?**
Teachers will often tell you to ‘skim this text’ before you read. Why? Well, before you read carefully, it’s helpful to know what the text is about and how it’s organised. Is it a problem/solution-type text? Is it a persuasive piece? Is it a historical account? An effective skim will help you to know.

**How to skim**
There are 2 ways to skim. Try both and see what works best for you.

**Skimming A:** Look (don’t read!) quickly through the entire text. Notice repeated words and ideas to get an idea of the topic and organisation of information.

**Skimming B:** Read the heading/s, read the introduction, read the first sentences only of each paragraph and read the conclusion. This will show you the main points and the structure of the text.

### SCANNING

**Why scan?**
The best way to think about scanning is hunting. You use this strategy when you’re simply trying to find a name, date or specific piece of information in a text. You will use this strategy a lot when doing gap-fill or true/false/not given questions, for instance.

**How to scan**
Don’t read, just look! Reading will slow you down. Turn off your brain and just look for the relevant section. Once you find it, then you will use the third and most important reading strategy: reading carefully!

### READING CAREFULLY

**Why read carefully?**
In a language test, skimming and scanning are just part of the process. When you actually need to answer questions, then you have to slow down to read carefully.

**How to read carefully**
Imagine you’re looking for an answer to a question and you’ve found the relevant section in the text by scanning. Now, you need to read the two or three sentences around that section. If you read too quickly, you will probably have to read again. And again. This is a huge waste of time!

Instead, practice reading at a pace where you fully understand the text the first time.

Try reading dramatically and slower than usual, emphasising important words in your head, or scribbling notes and underlining while you read.

*Break the habit of returning to the start of a sentence or paragraph when you’ve read it.*
3 Tips for IELTS reading practice

In order to achieve a high score in the IELTS reading test, practice your reading comprehension skills using these 3 Tips:

**Tip 1: Read Widely**

You never know what you’ll get on test day, so it’s a good idea to read widely as you prepare. Set yourself a reading goal and use online resources such as:

- The Conversation
- National Geographic
- The Guardian
- BBC

Work on skimming for overall comprehension, and careful reading. Not only will this improve your reading speed and general knowledge, but you’ll be building vocabulary too.

**Tip 2: Summarise paragraphs as you read**

Get into the habit of looking up after each paragraph you have read and then summarise the main idea/points in your own words in just 1-2 sentences.

This is a great way to exercise your brain, and it will greatly improve your reading speed and comprehension skills.

**Tip 3: Keep a record of new vocabulary**

After reading an article, note down any new words you have discovered and their meaning on an Excel spreadsheet or in a notebook or on flashcards.

Then review these words every day whenever you can: before work, during your lunch break, after work, on the train, before bed (!) etc.

For expert advice, secret methods, practice activities, mock tests and everything IELTS, sign up to E2Language today!
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- grammar improvement
- pronunciation refinement
- general English
- and more!

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