

STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE 15: ASTRONOMER

Hello. I'm Margot Politis. Welcome to Study English IELTS preparation.

Today, we're going to talk about the IELTS speaking and reading tests.

The speaking test includes an interview, where you can be asked to talk about yourself, your family, your job or maybe your studies.

But you won't have to answer any questions today. Instead, we're going to interview a man called Perry Vlahos. He's an astronomer. By asking Perry a series of questions, we can learn a bit more about what makes a good response.

Let's begin by asking Perry a typical part 1 type question.

"Perry, can you tell us about yourself?"

Well, currently I'm the Vice-President of the Astronomical Society of Victoria. Another thing I do is the tours at the Melbourne Observatory, where a lot of people come in to get a look through the telescopes and have been there for a long time - very historical instruments, in some cases.



Perry answered the question very well. He gave *detail* in his answer.

He's the Vice-President of the Astronomical Society of Victoria, and he does tours at the Melbourne Observatory.

Perry *ordered points logically* and he used *linking words* like 'currently', and 'another thing'.

Did you notice that he started his response with the word 'well'?

He did this so he could have some time to think about his answer.

Sometimes people will use *fillers* like 'well', 'um' or 'ah' while they are thinking about what they want to say next.

It's best to *minimise fillers*. Don't use them too often, because it affects *fluency*.

Fluency is an important feature of your spoken language that the examiner is listening for.

What question would you ask Perry next?

Perry is an astronomer. We might ask him about his area of study, astronomy.

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“Perry, could you tell us about astronomy?”

Astronomy is very much a cutting edge science. It’s the oldest science and it’s also the newest science.

And then, every time we find out something new and interesting out there, it also tells us something new and interesting about ourselves and our place in the cosmos.

Perry used words that belong to the field of astronomy.

For example, he talked about ‘cutting edge science’ and ‘the cosmos’.

Perry also used *opposites* in his description. He described astronomy as being both the ‘oldest’ science and the ‘newest’ science.

Perry didn’t just tell us facts about astronomy, he *extended the description* to tell us his opinions about the effect that astronomy can have.

He said that: “It can tell us something new and interesting about ourselves and our place in the cosmos”.

To enhance his response, Perry could have talked more about the cosmos. That would show more of his *vocabulary range*.

So, let’s ask Perry:

“Why did you choose to study astronomy?”

When I was about eleven or twelve and had my first science lesson at high school and the teacher went up to the board, drew a semi circle, put in various dots, labelled them, said: “Right. Now copy this down into your books. These are stars, planets and constellations, go out there and find them tonight and then let me know how you went.” It inspired me, fired my imagination and gave me something to work towards.



Perry answered this question by telling a story. He used *narration*.

He began the story by telling us when it happened, that is:

“when I was eleven or twelve”,

and he then told us where the story took place, that is:

“in my first science lesson at high school”.

The *narrative* follows a sequence of events.

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Perry used *direct speech*. He quoted exactly what the teacher said.

“The teacher said: “Right. Now copy this down into your books”.”

By quoting what the teacher said, his response is more interesting.

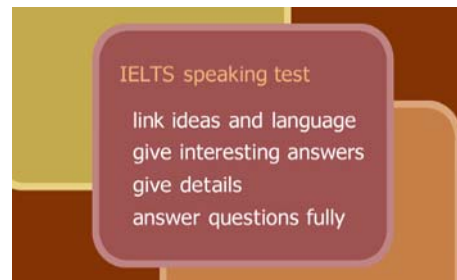
By listening to Perry, we can get a few useful tips for the IELTS speaking test.

Perry did a number of things that you should do in your IELTS test, to give the examiner the best chance to hear you speaking clearly.

It’s a good idea to *link ideas and language together* and *give interesting answers*.

You should also try to *give details* and *answer questions fully*.

Remember how Perry told us that astronomy was both the oldest and also the newest science?



Using these *opposites* was a good way for him to describe the field. It also allowed him to show that he was aware of the relationship between these words.

Understanding the relationship between words can help to build your *vocabulary*. It will also help you to answer some questions in the IELTS reading test.

Let’s have a look at some word relations you should know.

First, *synonyms* - words that mean the same.

For example, for ‘interesting’, we have *synonyms* such as:

- ‘entertaining’,
- ‘fascinating’, and
- ‘intriguing’.

And for the word ‘beautiful’, we have:

- ‘gorgeous’,
- ‘handsome’,
- ‘lovely’, and
- ‘exquisite’.



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You should also know about *opposites*.

For example:

'high and low',

'big and small',

'anxious and calm',

'cheap and expensive'.

opposites	
high	low
big	small
anxious	calm
cheap	expensive

Another group of related words that can be useful to know is *words related by degree*. These are words we can put on a scale.

For example:

'hot',

'warm',

'cool' and

'cold'.

scale	
hot	
warm	
cool	
cold	

'Hot' and 'cold' can also be opposites. So can 'warm' and 'cool'.

Now here's Perry talking about what it's like to look up at the stars with his telescopes.

Listen for *adjectives* and *adverbs* as we ask: "Perry, do you enjoy your work as an astronomer?"

I imagine the closest that I come to a great spiritual experience is when I'm out there with my telescope, total darkness and the universe above my head, and you feel this strong connection between all of those elements, and that really fires me, and I'm always looking for new things to see as well.



Perry uses a range of *adjectives* such as:

'total darkness,'

'strong connection', and

'new things'.

Can you think of any *synonyms* for these?

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How about:

'absolute darkness',

'firm connection', and

'unfamiliar things'.

What about *opposites*?



The opposite of 'strong connection' is 'weak connection'.

The opposite of 'new things' is 'old things'.

Perry also uses the *adverb* 'always'.

The *opposite* of 'always' is 'never'.

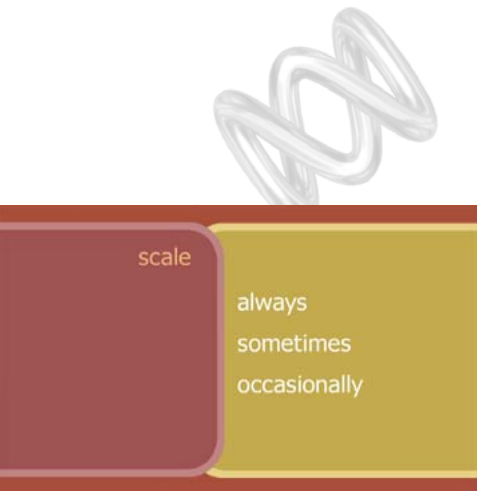
We could also form a *scale* from 'always':

'always',

'sometimes',

'occasionally',

'never'.



Knowing how words relate is useful when answering 'true', 'false' and 'not given' questions in the IELTS reading test.

But that's all for today.

Let's review what we've learnt:

First, we saw how Perry answered interview questions. We saw how *linking ideas*, using *narrative* and *giving detailed answers* can be helpful.

Then, we looked at word relationships. We saw that learning *synonyms*, *opposites* and *scales* can help build vocabulary and can also help in the IELTS reading test.

Of course, all of these skills take practice.

Make sure you visit the Study English website for more. It's at abcasiapacific.com/studyenglish.

Bye bye.