

## THE 3 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN IELTS/CEFR PREPARATION: (NOT ADAPTING TO THE EXAM FORMAT, POOR TIME MANAGEMENT, AND INSUFFICIENT

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the three most widespread mistakes that hinder candidates preparing for the IELTS and CEFR exams from achieving high scores. The main goal is to demonstrate that strategic preparation is equally as important as language proficiency itself. The key mistakes examined are: Not Adapting to the Exam Format: Candidates' lack of understanding regarding the specific question types and scoring criteria in each section. Poor Time Management: The lack of skills necessary to efficiently complete the test within the strict time limits. Insufficient Practice: Neglecting regular and focused practice, especially in the active skills (Writing and Speaking). The article offers practical solutions and strategies to overcome each mistake, emphasizing the necessity of a strategic approach to the preparation process. Adherence to these recommendations will help candidates maximize the demonstration of their knowledge under exam conditions.

**Аннотация:** В данной статье анализируются три наиболее распространенные ошибки, которые мешают кандидатам, готовящимся к экзаменам IELTS (International English Language Testing System) и CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), достигать высоких баллов. Основная цель — показать, что стратегическая подготовка так же важна, как и само знание языка. Ключевые рассмотренные ошибки: Неадаптированность к Формату Экзамена: Отсутствие у кандидатов понимания специфических типов вопросов и критериев оценивания в каждой секции. Плохое Управление Временем (Time Management): Недостаток навыков, необходимых для эффективного выполнения теста в строго ограниченные сроки. Недостаток Практики: Пренебрежение регулярной и целенаправленной практикой, особенно активных навыков (Письмо и Говорение). Статья предлагает практические решения и стратегии для преодоления каждой ошибки, подчеркивая необходимость стратегического подхода к процессу подготовки. Следование этим рекомендациям поможет кандидатам максимально эффективно продемонстрировать свои знания в условиях экзамена.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqola IELTS va CEFR imtihonlariga tayyorgarlik ko'rayotgan nomzodlarning yuqori natijaga erishishiga to'sqinlik qiluvchi eng keng tarqalgan uchta xatoni tahlil qiladi. Maqsad – strategik tayyorgarlikning til bilimining

o'zidan kam emasligini ko'rsatishdir. Tadqiq etilgan asosiy xatolar quyidagilardan iborat: Imtihon Formatiga Moslashmaslik: Nomzodlarning har bir bo'limdagi maxsus savol turlari va baholash mezonlarini tushunmasligi. Yomon Vaqtni Boshqarish: Cheklangan vaqt davomida testni samarali yakunlash uchun zarur bo'lgan ko'nikmaning yetishmasligi. Yetarli Darajada Amaliyotning Yo'qligi: Ayniqsa, faol ko'nikmalar (Yozish va Gapirish) bo'yicha muntazam va maqsadli amaliyotga e'tibor bermaslik. Maqolada har bir xatoni bartaraf etish bo'yicha amaliy yechimlar va strategiyalar taklif etiladi, bunda tayyorgarlik jarayoniga strategik yondashuv zarurligi ta'kidlanadi. Ushbu tavsiyalarga amal qilish nomzodlarning o'z bilimlarini imtihon sharoitida maksimal darajada namoyish etishlariga yordam beradi.

**Key words:** IELTS, CEFR, language exam, preparation strategy, exam format adaptation, time management, sufficient practice, mistake analysis, high, score / target band, language proficiency level.

**Introduction:** Not Adapting to the Exam Format: Many candidates approach IELTS or CEFR exams as mere general English language tests, relying solely on their existing grammar and vocabulary knowledge. This oversight—failing to adapt to the specific exam format—is perhaps the single biggest barrier to achieving a target score. The Error Defined: IELTS and CEFR-based tests are highly standardized. Each section (Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking) contains specific question types, time constraints, and scoring rubrics that differ significantly from everyday language use. A candidate with B2/C1 level English may perform poorly simply because they don't understand how the test wants them to answer. Common Examples of Format-Related Mistakes: Reading: Treating the texts as general reading practice instead of learning techniques for Skimming (quickly getting the main idea) and Scanning (finding specific details) to tackle question types like Matching Headings or True/False/Not Given. Listening: Not predicting the type of word required (e.g., a number, a date, a singular noun) when filling gaps, leading to careless errors. Writing: Failing to adhere to the strict structural requirements for Academic Task 1 (e.g., overview, grouping data) or Task 2 (clear thesis statement, structured paragraphs, appropriate academic tone). The Strategic Solution: Successful preparation must pivot from general language learning to exam-specific skill development. Study the Rubrics: Candidates must thoroughly understand the public scoring criteria (rubrics) for Writing and Speaking. Knowing exactly how marks are allocated for Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy allows for targeted practice. Master Question Types: Spend dedicated time practicing each specific question type until the technique becomes second nature. For instance, practice Multiple Choice questions in Listening until you can quickly eliminate distractors. Analyze Official Materials: Use only official practice materials (e.g.,

Cambridge IELTS books, official CEFR sample tests). These materials accurately reflect the required level of difficulty and format, preventing surprises on the test day. By treating the exam format as a separate skill to be mastered, candidates transform from language users into effective test-takers.

One of the most frequent and detrimental errors candidates make is failing to fully engage with the specific format and demands of the IELTS or CEFR exams. Many focus solely on general English language improvement while neglecting to master the exam-specific strategies. For instance, in the IELTS Reading section, it is not enough to simply understand the text; candidates must grasp the techniques required for question types such as "True/False/Not Given" or "Matching Headings." Similarly, in the Writing section, a lack of understanding regarding the four key assessment criteria ("Task Response," "Coherence and Cohesion," "Lexical Resource," and "Grammatical Range and Accuracy") often results in a lower score, even if the grammar is strong. Essentially, candidates attempt to "win the game" without first learning the rulebook, leading to lost points due to technical failures rather than language deficiencies. The difficulty of high-stakes tests like IELTS and CEFR lies not only in the linguistic challenge but also in the strict time constraints. A significant number of test-takers practice without a timer, which inevitably causes high stress and critical errors on the actual exam day. The most classic example is seen in the Writing module: candidates often spend too much time on the lower-weighted Task 1, leaving insufficient time to adequately complete the higher-weighted Task 2 (the Essay). This misallocation of time means the most critical component, which accounts for two-thirds of the Writing score, is rushed, incomplete, or poorly argued. Proficiency in time management is an integral skill for these exams, and it can only be developed through consistent, timed practice tests under simulated exam conditions. The third core mistake is the failure to convert "passive knowledge" into "active skill." Many students diligently memorize hundreds of vocabulary words and study complex grammar rules, but they neglect to practice actively using this knowledge fluently and naturally in the Speaking and Writing modules. Knowing a language and being able to deploy it under pressure in an exam setting are two different capabilities. A lack of sufficient and focused practice not only hinders recall but also negatively affects the ability to think quickly and speak spontaneously. To rectify this, the focus must shift beyond mere accumulation of knowledge towards active application—conducting regular full-length mock tests, rigorously analyzing every mistake, and dedicating significant effort to tasks that require the active production of language.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, achieving success in high-stakes language examinations like IELTS and CEFR hinges not just on English proficiency, but on adopting a strategic and deliberate approach to preparation. The three fundamental mistakes commonly

made by test-takers—failing to adapt to the exam format, poor time management, and insufficient active practice of language skills—are critical roadblocks preventing candidates from realizing their full potential. To overcome these pitfalls, students must shift from simply studying more to studying smarter. A deep understanding of the demands of each test section, consistent execution of tasks under timed conditions, and a focused effort to transform passive knowledge into active Speaking and Writing abilities are the key steps toward achieving a high score. When preparation successfully integrates these processes, candidates can confidently demonstrate their knowledge and maximize their effectiveness on exam day.

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