



IELTS Parts 1-3 - Formality & Getting the tone right

IELTS Speaking Tone

Lesson 6

When you do your speaking test, it is important that you get the **speaking tone** correct. In this lesson we'll look at how **linking phrases** can affect the tone.

You are basically having a conversation with someone, so you want to **sound natural**. Some candidates think they have to sound very formal and academic.

You obviously do need some good vocabulary to get a higher score on the test, such as that from the academic word list (used correctly of course!).

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However, language that you would hear naturally if you had a conversation with your friends is also as important and will get noticed by the examiner.

Take a look at this question and then the answer by a candidate:

When do you think it is acceptable to be late for appointments?

You should always try to be on time. However, there are some occasions when it is ok to be late.

Firstly, in my country the traffic is terrible, so sometimes you cannot help but be late because of that. Furthermore, if you are very ill, this may be another reason that makes you late. You can't really help that. Moreover, if an emergency arises because of, for example, a problem with your child, you will need to take care of that first of course.

What do you think is the problem with the speaking tone? Click to see below.



[Show/Hide Answer](#)

The problem with this response is the words linking the ideas, or the transitions. It is not that they are 'wrong' as such. In theory they can be used as the meaning is clear, but they are very formal.

They are suitable for an academic essay, but you will not often hear someone use these words when they are speaking with you.

So if you use these it will make what you say sound very forced and unnatural.

Here is the same answer but the speaking tone is more natural:

When do you think it is acceptable to be late for appointments?

*You should always try to be on time, **but having said that**, there are some occasions when it is ok to be late. **A particular problem in my country is** the terrible traffic jams, so sometimes you cannot help but be late because of that. **Also**, if you are very ill for an unexpected reason, again there is nothing you can do about that. **Another good reason is** if an emergency arises because of, for example, a problem with your child, you will need to take care of that first of course.*

As you can see, this sounds more natural and will sound more fluent. It will also seem less 'mechanical'.

So get into the habit of improving your speaking tone by forming linking phrases that are not too mechanical or formal.

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