IELTS Speaking Linkers: Detailed Study Notes

1. Why linkers matter in IELTS Speaking

Linkers contribute to **Fluency and Coherence**, one of the IELTS Speaking assessment criteria. This criterion considers how logically you organise your ideas, how smoothly you speak, and how appropriately you use cohesive devices to make your meaning easy to follow. Cohesive devices include linking words, conjunctions, and pronouns—not just memorised transition phrases.

Compare these two practice answers:

Without clear connections:

I like my neighbourhood. It is quiet. There are some shops. It is far from my university. I want to stay here.

With clearer connections:

I like my neighbourhood **because** it's quiet, and there are some useful shops nearby. It's quite far from my university, though. Even so, I'd prefer to stay here.

The second answer makes the relationships clearer: a reason, extra information, a disadvantage, and a decision despite that disadvantage.

A useful principle is:

Choose the relationship between your ideas first. Then choose a linker that expresses it.

IDP recommends selecting linkers according to their function and warns that overusing them can make an answer confusing or irritating to follow.

2. Linkers organised by function

A. Adding information

Use these when you want to add another detail or point.

Linker or phrase	How to use it	Practice example
and	Join related ideas	"I enjoy cooking, and I often try new recipes."
also	Add another point	"I also enjoy baking."
too	Add information, usually at the end	"My sister enjoys cooking too."
as well	Similar to *too*	"It helps me save money as well."

Linker or phrase	How to use it	Practice example
another reason is that…	Introduce an additional reason	“Another reason is that I can choose healthier ingredients.”
on top of that	Add a further point with emphasis	“It’s affordable. On top of that, it’s close to my home.”
not only… but also…	Emphasise two related points	“It’s not only convenient but also affordable.”

Practice answer:

I like studying at home because it’s comfortable, and I can organise my own schedule. I also find it easier to concentrate there.

B. Giving reasons

Use these to explain why something happens or why you hold an opinion.

Linker or phrase	What follows it	Practice example
because	A clause: subject + verb	“I walk to work because I live nearby.”
because of	A noun or noun phrase	“I stayed indoors because of the rain.”
since	A reason clause	“Since I live nearby, I usually walk.”
as	A reason clause	“As I had some free time, I visited my cousin.”
the main reason is that…	An explanation	“The main reason is that it saves me time.”
one reason is that…	One explanation among several	“One reason is that I enjoy working with people.”

Grammar distinction:

Correct: “I was late because the traffic was heavy.”
Correct: “I was late because of the heavy traffic.”
Incorrect: “I was late because of the traffic was heavy.”

For everyday practice, *because* is a straightforward starting point. Add alternatives when they express your meaning naturally.

C. Giving examples

Use these to make a general statement more specific.

Linker or phrase	Typical use	Practice example
for example	Introduce an illustration	"I enjoy outdoor activities. For example, I often go cycling."
for instance	Similar to *for example*	"Some tasks are easier online. For instance, you can pay bills from home."
like	Give examples conversationally	"I enjoy sports like cricket and badminton."
such as	Introduce examples within a sentence	"I use educational apps, such as vocabulary apps."
a good example is...	Highlight one example	"A good example is the park near my house."

Practice answer:

I mainly use my phone for practical things, like checking directions and paying bills. For example, I used it yesterday to find a restaurant.

Natural spoken example markers include *like, for example,* and *for instance*.

D. Showing contrast

Use these when two ideas differ or when one idea limits another.

Linker or phrase	Function	Practice example
but	Show a direct contrast	"The course was difficult, but I enjoyed it."
although	Introduce a contrasting clause	"Although it was expensive, I bought it."
even though	Emphasise a contrast	"Even though I was tired, I finished the work."
though	Add a contrast, including at the end	"It was expensive. It was worth it, though."

Linker or phrase	Function	Practice example
whereas	Compare contrasting facts	“I prefer tea, whereas my brother prefers coffee.”
while	Contrast two situations	“While some people enjoy city life, others prefer the countryside.”
that said	Qualify a previous point	“Online learning is convenient. That said, I sometimes miss classroom discussions.”
on the other hand	Introduce another side	“Working from home saves travel time. On the other hand, it can feel lonely.”

Grammar distinction:

Correct: “Although it was raining, we went out.”
Correct: “It was raining, but we went out.”
Incorrect: “Although it was raining, but we went out.”

Avoid confusing these two expressions:

- *On the other hand* introduces another side: “Cities offer more jobs. On the other hand, housing can be expensive.”
- *On the contrary* rejects a previous claim: “I wouldn’t say the trip was boring. On the contrary, it was fascinating.”

E. Showing results

Use these to explain what happened because of something else.

Linker or phrase	Practice example
so	“The bus was late, so I took a taxi.”
that’s why	“I live quite far away. That’s why I leave home early.”
as a result	“I practised regularly. As a result, I became more confident.”
because of that	“My laptop stopped working. Because of that, I missed the deadline.”
which means…	“The library stays open late, which means I can study there after work.”

Compare reason and result:

Reason: “I took a taxi because the bus was late.”
Result: “The bus was late, so I took a taxi.”

Both express the same relationship, but they organise the information differently.

F. Sequencing events

These are useful when telling a story or describing a process.

Linker or phrase	Practice example
to begin with	“To begin with, we checked the weather.”
first	“First, we bought our tickets.”
then	“Then we found our seats.”
after that	“After that, we went for lunch.”
before that	“Before that, I’d never travelled alone.”
while	“While we were waiting, we took some photos.”
meanwhile	“I prepared the food. Meanwhile, my brother set the table.”
eventually	“Eventually, we found the right address.”
in the end	“In the end, we decided to stay another night.”

Useful distinction:

- *At first* describes an initial situation: “At first, I felt nervous.”
- *First* identifies the first step: “First, I introduced myself.”
- *Eventually* suggests something happened after time or difficulty: “Eventually, I felt comfortable.”

Practice story:

At first, I was nervous because I didn’t know anyone. Then I started talking to another student. After that, we joined a group activity, and eventually I felt much more relaxed.

G. Introducing opinions

These are often called discourse markers or opinion frames rather than conjunctions. They help signal your position to the listener.

Expression	Practice example
I think…	"I think public transport should be more reliable."
I'd say…	"I'd say convenience is the biggest advantage."
personally…	"Personally, I prefer studying in the morning."
in my opinion…	"In my opinion, practical skills are important."
from my point of view…	"From my point of view, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks."
I suppose…	"I suppose it depends on someone's lifestyle."
I tend to think…	"I tend to think smaller classes are more effective."

Avoid stacking several opinion frames together.

Overloaded:

"Personally, in my opinion, I think, from my point of view, exercise is important."

Cleaner:

"I think exercise is important because it helps me manage stress."

H. Giving balanced or qualified answers

These phrases help you avoid making your answer too absolute.

Expression	Practice example
it depends on…	"It depends on how much time people have."
to some extent	"I agree to some extent, but cost is also important."
in some cases	"In some cases, studying alone is more effective."
generally speaking	"Generally speaking, I prefer quieter places."
not necessarily	"Not necessarily. A higher price doesn't always mean better quality."
even so	"It can be expensive. Even so, some people consider it worthwhile."

Expression	Practice example
at the same time	“Parents should guide children. At the same time, children need some independence.”

Practice answer:

I agree to some extent because technology can save time. At the same time, it can be distracting, so it depends on how people use it.

I. Clarifying or correcting yourself

These help you explain your meaning more precisely.

Expression	Function	Practice example
I mean...	Clarify	“It’s a peaceful place—I mean, there isn’t much traffic.”
what I mean is...	Explain your intended meaning	“What I mean is that students need practical experience.”
in other words...	Restate an idea	“The timetable is flexible. In other words, you can choose when to study.”
or rather...	Correct a detail	“I went there last year—or rather, two years ago.”
to be more precise...	Give a more exact detail	“I lived there for a while—to be more precise, about eight months.”

Practice example:

I usually study at night—or rather, in the late evening, before dinner.



J. Introducing the past, present, or future

Time expressions help the listener understand when an experience happened or how a situation has changed.

Time reference	Useful expressions	Practice example
Past	when I was younger, back then, in the past	"When I was younger, I spent more time outdoors."
Present	these days, at the moment, now	"These days, I mostly exercise at home."
Future	in the future, looking ahead, one day	"In the future, I'd like to learn another language."
Change over time	since then, over the years	"Since then, I've become more confident."

Practice answer:

When I was younger, I preferred team sports. These days, I'm more interested in running because it fits my schedule.

K. Rounding off an answer

Expression	Practice example
overall	"Overall, it was a memorable experience."
all in all	"All in all, I enjoyed the trip."
so, I'd say...	"So, I'd say the main advantage is convenience."
that's mainly why...	"That's mainly why I enjoy living there."

Do not force a conclusion into every response. An answer can end naturally once you have explained your point.

3. Spoken linkers versus essay-style linkers

IELTS Speaking generally calls for simpler, more conversational linking language than IELTS Writing. Formal linkers are not automatically grammatically wrong in speech, but using them repeatedly can make a personal answer sound like a written essay.

These are useful practice alternatives—not exact replacements in every context:

More formal expression	More conversational option
furthermore	also / on top of that
moreover	what's more / also
consequently	so / as a result
therefore	so / that's why
nevertheless	even so / still
in conclusion	overall / so, I'd say...

Essay-like:

"I enjoy cooking. Furthermore, it is economical. Moreover, it enables me to control my diet."

More conversational:

"I enjoy cooking because it saves money. I can also control what goes into my meals."

The aim is appropriate language, not a ban on individual words.

4. Applying linkers in each part of the test

IELTS Speaking includes a personal interview, an individual long turn, and a discussion. The long turn tests your ability to speak at length and organise your ideas logically.

Part 1: Connect a direct answer to a reason or detail

Practice structure:

Answer → reason → optional example or contrast

Question: Do you enjoy reading?

"Yes, especially fiction, because it helps me relax. I usually read before bed, although I don't always have time during the week."

Connections used:

- *because* gives a reason.
- *although* introduces a limitation.

Avoid turning a simple personal answer into a numbered speech:

"Firstly, I enjoy reading. Secondly, it is relaxing. In conclusion, reading is my hobby."

Part 2: Help the listener follow a story

Practice structure:

Introduce the topic → background → events → feelings → significance

Question: Describe a memorable journey.

“I’d like to talk about a trip I took with two friends. At the time, we’d just finished our exams, so we wanted a short break.

At first, we planned to travel by train, but we couldn’t get tickets. In the end, we went by bus.

When we arrived, we were tired, so we rested for a while. After that, we explored the area and tried some local food.

What made the trip memorable was the time we spent together. Although it was only a short holiday, I still remember it clearly because we had so many interesting conversations.”

Notice that the linkers support the story. They do not replace its details.

Part 3: Develop and qualify an argument

Practice structure:

Opinion → reason → example → qualification or contrasting point

Question: Should cities invest more in public transport?

“I think they should because reliable public transport gives people more travel options. For example, someone who doesn’t own a car could find it easier to reach work. That said, investment alone isn’t enough; services also need to be reliable. So, I’d say both funding and good management matter.”

This is a practice framework, not a compulsory answer formula.

5. Common mistakes and how to fix them

Using too many linkers

Overloaded:

“Well, actually, personally, firstly, I think my hometown is nice, and moreover, furthermore, it has many parks.”

Cleaner:

“I like my hometown because it has plenty of parks and quiet places to relax.”

Overuse can weaken clarity rather than improve it.

Using a linker with the wrong meaning

Illogical:

“I enjoy swimming. On the other hand, I go to the pool every Friday.”

The second sentence supports the first; it does not contrast with it.

Better:

“I enjoy swimming, so I go to the pool every Friday.”

Confusing *despite* and *although*

Correct: “Although it was raining, we went out.”
Correct: “Despite the rain, we went out.”
Correct: “Despite being tired, I continued.”
Incorrect: “Despite it was raining, we went out.”

Pattern:

- *Although* + subject + verb.
- *Despite* + noun or *-ing* form.

Using *because* and *so* for the same connection

Avoid:

“Because it was late, so I went home.”

Use:

“Because it was late, I went home.”

Or:

“It was late, so I went home.”

Confusing *as well* with *as well as*

“I enjoy swimming as well.”
“I enjoy swimming as well as cycling.”

In the first sentence, *as well* adds to something already mentioned. In the second, *as well as* connects two activities.

Treating thinking phrases as a script

Expressions such as *well* or *let me think* can introduce a response, but they should not become long, repeated openings. Linking language can guide your ideas and give you some thinking time; it still needs to serve the answer.

Keep it short:

“Let me think… probably my older sister.”

Rather than:

“Well, that is a very interesting and challenging question, and I have never really thought about it before…”

6. A manageable starter set

For practice, begin with these expressions. This is a learning shortlist, not an official IELTS requirement.

Purpose	**Starter expressions**
Add	and, also
Explain why	because
Contrast	but, although
Give examples	for example, like
Show results	so, that’s why
Sequence	then, after that
Give an opinion	I think, I’d say
Qualify	it depends on
Clarify	I mean
Round off	overall

Practise using each expression in different answers rather than memorising one complete response.