

Chatterbox #153 – An interview with Jessica: Part 1

Episode Description

In this special two-part Chatterbox episode (this is part 1), Andrew talks with Jessica from All Ears English. Join them for their conversation about the IELTS exam, test preparation, and the importance of setting long-term goals. If you plan on taking a standardized English test at some point in the future, don't miss either part of this episode!

Sample Dialogue

Andrew: Now, you've mentioned the – if I'm pronouncing it correctly – the IELTS. Is that correct?

Jessica: Yeah, that's good. That's better than a lot of students. A lot of students say *islets*, and it's not the right thing.

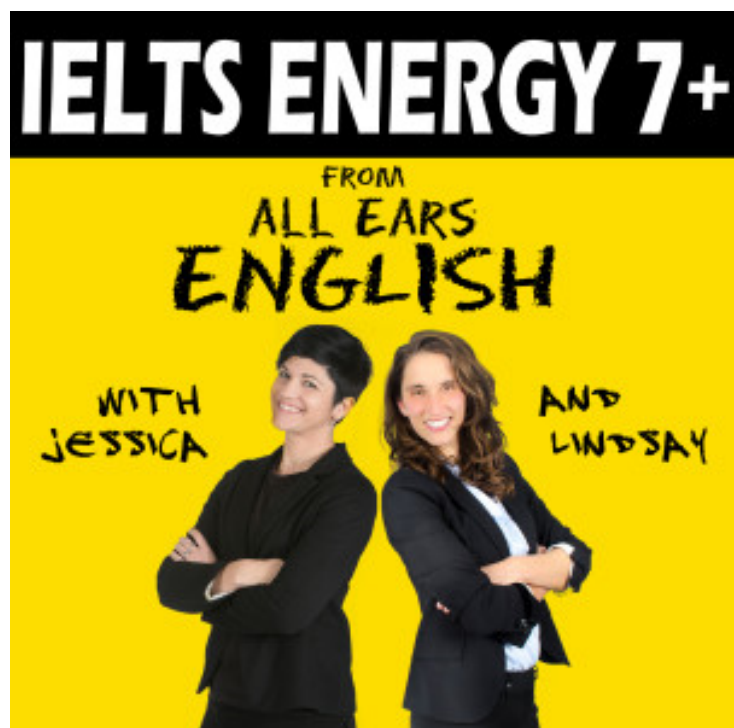
Andrew: It's an interesting acronym; it's kind of difficult to read out.

Jessica: Yeah.

Andrew: But you've mentioned this and maybe all of our listeners aren't familiar with what this is. So could you just explain the abbreviation?

Expressions Included in the Learning Materials

- To give someone the rundown
- Jeez
- Face-to-face
- A hard science
- To gear up for something



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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the detailed explanations section that follows the transcript.

Transcript

Andrew: Hey everybody. What's up? I'm Andrew and you're listening to Culips. Today we've got a very special episode for you, but before we start, I'm just going to remind you to check out our website at Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com. While you're there, I suggest that you sign up and become a Culips member. Membership gives you access to our learning materials, which include full transcripts for all of our episodes, detailed explanations of all the interesting, important, and idiomatic expressions that we use, and quizzes that will help you test your comprehension and understanding. So don't hesitate; sign up and become a member today. Also, make sure to visit our Facebook and Twitter pages and send us a message or a tweet to let us know how you like the show. If you have any episode suggestions, please let us know because we really want to feature content that interests you.

OK. And now for today's episode. A few days ago, I had a conversation with Jessica from All Ears English, and you're going to get to hear our chat in just a moment. Jessica is an expert in test preparation and we had a really interesting conversation about the IELTS exam. Now, if you don't know what this is, don't worry, Jessica is going to explain it all. But basically, if you ever want to study in – or move to – an English-speaking country, it's likely that you'll have to take this exam at some point. And so Jessica was kind enough **to give us the full rundown** and tell us all about IELTS. So let's get right to it. Here's my talk with Jessica.

Hi Jessica. Welcome to the Culips podcast.

Jessica: Hi Andrew. Thank you for having me.

Andrew: No problem. And I was telling you earlier, but I'm very excited because this is the first interview that I've done remotely. So I'm here in Montreal, and where are you?

Jessica: I'm in Portland, Oregon.

Andrew: Portland, Oregon. Wow, Portland's a really cool place, I've been there before.

Jessica: Oh, have you? When did you come here?

Andrew: Oh, it must've been about 5 years ago now. I was living in British Columbia and I actually took the train from Vancouver to Portland.

- Jessica: I love that train ride, the... What is it? Amtrak Cascades, right?
- Andrew: Yeah, the Cascade Line. Yeah, that's right.
- Jessica: We've taken the train up to Vancouver from here also, and it was probably, like, 3 years ago. And that was one of the first places my son learned to crawl.
- Andrew: Oh, no way.
- Jessica: It was, like, on the train, yeah. Like, under all the tables and stuff.
- Andrew: It's a good place to practise.
- Jessica: Yeah. It really works on your balance.
- Andrew: Oh yeah, I bet.
- Jessica: It set him ahead, I think, crawling-wise.
- Andrew: Yeah, for sure.
- Jessica: Exactly.
- Andrew: So maybe you could introduce yourself to our listeners, if you don't mind.
- Jessica: Sure. So, my name is Jessica Beck and I live in Portland now, but I have taught ESL – mostly test preparation, mostly IELTS test preparation – in Taiwan and Cambodia, and of course I taught here for a few years. And I also write textbooks. I have written... I am finishing my 17th textbook right now.
- Andrew: Wow. Your 17th textbook. That's very impressive.
- Jessica: Yeah. It sounds like such a huge number. Well, it is; it is a huge number.
- Andrew: Yeah. So what type of textbooks do you write?
- Jessica: Mostly for... Cengage is the publisher, so mostly Cengage Asia. So if you live in, like, Taiwan, Singapore, China, you can get my textbooks. They're all for high school, university age, all levels. I've done six writing textbooks, but also lots of test prep textbooks.
- Andrew: Wow, very cool.
- Jessica: Yeah. So test prep has really been my life for, like, a decade.
- Andrew: Wow. And how did you get into test preparation?

- Jessica: Yeah. Well, when I was living... When I moved to Taipei, I had already taught adults for a long time in Cambodia and I wanted to still teach adults, but when I arrived in Taiwan, they said, "No, sorry. You have to teach kids now. You're in Taipei, you have to teach kids." So, like, I did. I taught kindy for a year, but of course I did end up finding schools for adults, and the nicest school that I found was an IELTS centre, it was an IELTS school. So I got into it because of the age level that I wanted to teach and it just happened to be test prep, and yeah, and then it just snowballed from there.
- Andrew: Right on. Now, you've mentioned the – if I'm pronouncing it correctly – the IELTS. Is that correct?
- Jessica: Yeah, that's good. That's better than a lot of students. A lot of students say *islets*, and it's not the right thing.
- Andrew: It's an interesting acronym; it's kind of difficult to read out.
- Jessica: Yeah.
- Andrew: But you've mentioned this and maybe all of our listeners aren't familiar with what this is. So could you just explain the abbreviation?
- Jessica: Oh, you don't know? No, I'm just kidding. Yeah, it's so funny, like, when you're so familiar with something yourself it's always, like, kind of a shock to realize that this doesn't exist in another person's mind, because it's so much in your head all the time. So *IELTS* is an acronym for the International English Language Testing System and it's an English proficiency test, so it tells you how good your English is, and it's created by the British Council and IDP Australia. So there are two versions. There is an academic version, so that's what most people take. If you're a non-native English-speaker and you want to go to a university that teaches in English, then you have to take this test, or TOEFL, but most universities accept IELTS, sometimes prefer IELTS now.
- Andrew: OK.
- Jessica: And then there's the general exam also, and that's for people who are looking to immigrate or need to prove their English for, like, visa purposes in some countries. Even, like, American native English-speakers born here, everything, if they want to, say, be a nurse in the UK or Australia, they have to take IELTS.
- Andrew: OK, very interesting. So this is a test of English proficiency, mainly, I would suppose, written by non-native speakers, but in some special circumstances, even native speakers have to take this exam.

- Jessica: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So it's mostly, like, university age, you know, people who are going to take this test because they are trying to get their bachelor's, but most often their master's because they're already quite advanced in their studies, right? So they want to get, like, a further degree in America or the UK or Australia. Or Canada. Canada also. I don't want to forget you guys.
- Andrew: Yeah, we're here, we're here. And it's really interesting, actually, in preparing for this episode, I did a little research about the test and I was looking up which countries perform the best on this exam and which native speakers perform the best, and it's actually Germans; Germans do the best on the non-academic one. I can't remember the specifics at all.
- Jessica: On the general exam?
- Andrew: On the general one. They even beat English native speakers, so I have to take my hat off to the Germans.
- Jessica: That's so funny. And you know what? I am not a bit surprised, because I feel like if the Germans are going... Like, if someone from Germany is approaching a test situation like this, they're going to prepare, right?
- Andrew: Right.
- Jessica: They're going to say, like, "Well, even though my English is awesome, it's not my first language. I am going to learn all the details of what this test is." Whereas, like, an American will just say, "Well, you know, **jeez**, I speak English all the time, I don't need to learn about the test." And then they do kind of poorly. I have had to, like, mark down native speakers before because they just didn't do what I asked them to do.
- Andrew: Right. Yeah, that's funny. I guess it's the attitude that you have going in with it that might determine your result in the end.
- Jessica: Were there statistics on who did the best on the academic exam?
- Andrew: You know what? I think it was also people from Germany.
- Jessica: Oh funny.
- Andrew: Yeah, if I remember correctly, I think they were at the top of the list on both tests, which is pretty impressive.
- Jessica: Well, yeah. You know, I'm just impressed with how many languages northern Europeans speak anyway. And just like how, you know, natural English can sound from somebody in Amsterdam or in Berlin or something. But of course... Well, Canada is different, but Americans are kind of monolingual. That's the right word, right?

- Andrew: Yeah, monolingual. Whenever I speak to western Europeans, and northern Europeans too, I'm always very impressed with their English and their other language abilities too. It's amazing what they do over there.
- Jessica: I know. I am so jealous. Now that I am... Like, my son's approaching kindergarten age, like, next year he'll go to kindergarten, not this year, but it's yeah. Man, I wish they worked in the... You know, two different languages from first grade, three different languages from middle school, like, it just keeps increasing, you know?
- Andrew: Yeah. Yeah, it's really cool, the educational system over there, very impressive.
- Jessica: Yeah, yeah. Well, I'll just have to supplement myself with James, yeah.
- Andrew: There you go. OK, so back to this exam, the IELTS. Can you explain the structure of the test? What do you have to do?
- Jessica: Sure, yeah. So, as with most proficiency exams, it divides it by skill. So it all happens in one day, usually. So you show up at the test centre at like, 9 in the morning. And first you take the listening test, which is less than an hour; it's about 30, 40 minutes listening and then you have... Well, it's 30 minutes listening and then 10 minutes transferring your answers. And then you have the reading test immediately after, which is an hour. And then you have the writing test immediately after that, which is also an hour. So you have this, like, huge 3-hour block in the morning of just testing, testing, testing.
- Andrew: Wow.
- Jessica: I know. It's really tough.
- Andrew: It sounds difficult.
- Jessica: Yeah, right? Like, for anybody that would be difficult. That's why part of our... Because we have an IELTS course that we have online now and it's called 3 Keys IELTS. And part of that is a test day plan, you know, like, how to help you plan your time to have the most energy and what to do in between the modules. So between the morning and the afternoon, for example, like, what activities can you do to give you confidence for the speaking exam? Because the speaking exam is in the afternoon. Like, you could finish the morning at noon and then maybe your speaking exam isn't until, like, 6:00 pm. So, like, what do you do between there to sort of stay sharp, you know? It's a long day.
- Andrew: Yeah, that's very interesting. And you're right, often with standardized tests there's a strategy to writing it, right? It's not just what you know, but it's playing the game of taking the test. So I think this is...

Jessica: Exactly.

Andrew: Yeah. This is very interesting. So you have the three skills in the morning, and then you said in the afternoon you have the speaking exam?

Jessica: Mhmm, yeah. And the speaking exam is quite short; it's 11–14 minutes, so less than 15 minutes and you're done, you're out of there.

Andrew: OK.

Jessica: Yeah, and it's **face-to-face** with an examiner when you're doing your speaking. So that's the biggest difference between TOEFL and IELTS, because a lot of students can take one or the other, you know, when they're going to university. But TOEFL is all on the computer and IELTS is all, like, old-fashioned, like, with a person in front of you and, you know, like, hand-written essays and stuff. So yeah, they're quite different.

Andrew: OK. Yeah, interesting. You kind of answered my next question, because I was going to ask you about how the speaking test is delivered, because I know on some tests, you're right, you do it over the computer, or I've heard of some exams where you have to speak on the phone and leave a message for people.

Jessica: Oh my gosh. That would be so weird.

Andrew: That would be very weird.

Jessica: That sounds like... I don't know, it sounds kind of creepy, like it's some sort of spy game or something. Like, if you're, like, calling this unknown number and just leaving, like, a sample of your speech. Like, who's going to listen to it? That's weird.

Andrew: Yeah, it's a mystery. And really, it doesn't accurately test how you can speak, right? How good you are at conversation.

Jessica: Yeah, no.

Andrew: I think probably the way that IELTS is doing it here with a **face-to-face** conversation is going to be the most accurate measure.

Jessica: Yeah, for sure. Yeah, I mean even TOEFL, you have to, like, speak into the, you know, headphone or microphone, or whatever is like in front of your face, and you're just staring at a computer screen. And, you know, granted, today I mean I'm talking to you and I'm staring at a computer screen, so I guess, like, it can be a little more valid today. But for the most part, if you're speaking, it's usually, you know, **face-to-face**, and I think that helps your practice be more valuable also, right? Because if you're rehearsing for the IELTS exam, you're, like, talking to someone **face-to-face**, and that's what you do in real life, but if you're rehearsing for the TOEFL, like, that skill isn't going to carry over past the exam.

Andrew: Right. Now, I'm going to get a little geeky here for a minute.

Jessica: Yay!

Andrew: But I'm curious. As a measure of the speaking tests, are non-verbal, like, body language... Is that taken into account at all?

Jessica: Oh, good question. No, there is no measurement for that, and, in fact, if you are using body language instead of vocabulary, for example, like, that's going to hurt your score because the examiner has to look at these descriptions of the scores, right, when they're trying to judge what to give you. And one of the descriptors says that the candidate has – let me see – adequate vocabulary to get their point across, you know, like, adequate words to be able to communicate. So if you are using too many gestures, then that might mean you don't have the vocabulary to get your point across. But, having said that, I think the more natural you are speaking, the better it will be for your score. So, like, even though I am on the computer now and I can't see you, Andrew, at all, my hands are flying all over the place, like, that's just how I talk.

Andrew: Yeah, I asked this question, too, because in speaking tests that I've had to do in the past, I find myself much more animated than in real life.

Jessica: I know, right? Yeah.

Andrew: And I don't think I'm trying to, you know, communicate a vocabulary item that I don't know with a gesture, but it might just be that in that situation it feels natural to move a lot and so it's interesting to know that this can perhaps hurt your score, if you're overly animated.

Jessica: Yeah, if you're... I think it depends on the gesture, doesn't it?

Andrew: Sure.

- Jessica: Like, if you're, sort of, moving your hands to emphasize a point, that's going to help you because it's going to help your pronunciation be more natural, you know? Like, that emphasis is going to come through in your hands and your voice. Do you know what I mean? Like, you're going to really, really focus on that, and that's going to increase your pronunciation score for sure. But if you're, you know, just, like, stopping what you're saying and shrugging your shoulders, then that's going to look bad.
- Andrew: Yes, of course, that would definitely look bad. I can see that in my head right now.
- Jessica: Yeah. Or if you like... You know, I've had... I've seen some, like, lower-level candidates and they're, like, drawing in the air almost, trying to, like, get across, like, "You know, you know the... You know the thing? It's like this." And they can't get across the word. So yeah, that's going to hurt you.
- Andrew: It might help you if you're travelling in a foreign country and you're just desperately trying to communicate with someone, but in the exam room, it's probably best to avoid that strategy.
- Jessica: Well, yeah, necessary travel strategy for sure. But that's not what the examiner is testing, so yeah, it's not going to help you.
- Andrew: Cool. OK, so thanks for outlining the structure, and now I'm wondering about the scoring and how well do you have to perform to get an excellent score?
- Jessica: Yeah, so the scores are from 0 to 9. Nine is, like, the most amazing native speaker. It's, you know, difficult for native speakers even to get all 9s. So most students aim for a 6. Like, a 6 is generally a good student, someone who has gone to class and studied and practised and, you know, just a good student. But if you're going to push beyond that... if you're going to try and get a 7, which a lot of universities ask for, is, like, 6.5 to 7, if you're going to push in that range, then that means you really have to challenge yourself outside the classroom. So, you know, it doesn't have to be boring, it's anything from, like, going to a chat group or joining a running club with English-speakers and chatting to them, watching movies. It's going into more native-speaker land than you do in the classroom, you know? And that's when you pick up more natural pronunciation, interesting vocabulary, able to more readily express ideas in English, you know. That's a 7, and then above that is just awesome.
- Andrew: OK, so 8 and 9 is really for the elite.

- Jessica: Yeah, totally, totally. Eight, yeah it's tough, it's tough. You know, a lot of students are aiming for a 7. That's, like, this magic number and that's what we set everything at in our course, is, like, able to get you over that mountain, to help you get that 7, and then above and beyond that, that's just, like, your personal amazing determination.
- Andrew: OK, very interesting. So you said – if I remember correctly – you need between a 6 and a 6.5, usually, to get into a university?
- Jessica: Yeah, every university asks for different scores. So, like, a community college, you know, a two-year school for example, might ask for just a 6. I've even heard of 5.5 as being acceptable, which is incredible to me because that's kind of low. But if you're going to, you know, a good university, probably a 6.5. And it depends on the degree also, like, if you're going for a degree in linguistics then they're going to ask you for a 7.5, because of course that has to be stronger, so that makes sense.
- Andrew: Sure. Yeah, very interesting. I looked at just one Canadian university and they required a 6.5 in, I think, at least three areas, one of them being speaking, and you could have no lower than a 6 in one of the other areas. So if you got three 6 and a half and one 6 you were OK, but if you got three 6 and a half and one 5, that's not OK.
- Jessica: Yeah, so each skill will have its own score, right? And again, depending on the degree, maybe if it's – I don't know – more in the **hard science** realm maybe it would be a higher score in the reading and writing but lower in the speaking, would be acceptable, right?
- Andrew: Sure.
- Jessica: So it varies from program to program and school to school. So you really just... like, if you're going to take this exam you have to do your research. Figure out your goals first, you know, where are you aiming? Like what is your highest aspiration? You know, what is that most difficult score that you have to get? And then figure out the small steps to get there. And it is, like you said, you have to know the rules of the exam. I forget how you put it, but the exam does, you know, try to trick you and demand things of you that don't exist in real life. So you need to, like, approach this in a balanced way; have activities that strengthen your overall English, but you still need to know all the test strategies. So yeah, so in our course we have a 30-day plan and a 60-day study plan and every day it tells the student exactly what to do to achieve that balance. So, like, do this test practice for listening and then go watch a movie and talk about it. Do you know what I mean? It has activities for both.
- Andrew: Some preparation strategies **to gear you up for the exam**.

- Jessica: Yeah. Yeah but, you know, not just wasted on this one test, but also that it's going to strengthen your English skills for beyond that, for when you do reach the job or the university that you're going to. You're going to need good English or else why are you trying?
- Andrew: A long-term plan.
- Jessica: Yeah.
- Andrew: And I believe there's been research done on this too, that's, you know, that's looked into people that are taking tests similar to this. And the people who prepare for tests, they can usually do well on the test, but then, like you said, afterwards their English is sort of blah-blah. But if you take a more comprehensive approach and you're focusing on the skills you need in real life, as well as doing some test prep, then you're going to do well on the test, but you're also going to do well with speaking and using English in your real life afterwards.
- Jessica: Yeah, and that's... you know, we are always. Like, on our podcast we are always telling our students that they have to keep those further goals in mind because it motivates them to prepare to their fullest, but it also motivates them to, like, try their best on test day and, you know, keep up that determination and that work ethic. Because if you're only doing this for a test, like, not only is it boring but you also... like, it's really easy to get lazy. You know? Because it's boring, and you're like "Oh, I'll do that section tomorrow," or whatever. But if you have these further goals in mind and you're like, "I'm doing this not for a 7 on IELTS, but I am doing this to get into Cambridge," or what have you, you're more likely to actually do the work.
- Andrew: Sorry to interrupt, but we're out of time for today. Please make sure to tune in to Culips next week, when we'll be releasing part 2 of my conversation with Jessica. As always, remember to visit our website, at Culips.com, and make sure to like our Facebook page and follow our Twitter account too. OK, that's it for now. Bye!

Detailed Explanations

To give someone the rundown

When you **give someone the rundown**, you provide them with a description or explanation of something. In this episode, Andrew introduces Jessica by saying that she is going to **give Culips listeners a full rundown** of the IELTS exam. In other words, Jessica will provide a complete and full description of all aspects of the IELTS examination.

So, when you provide information about something to someone, or you explain something completely to someone, you **give that person the rundown**.

There are three prepositions that we can use with this verb: **on**, **of**, and **about**. Let's take a look at how this works.

If you want to ask someone for an explanation about something, you could say, "Can you **give me the rundown on it?**" Or it is possible to also ask, "Can you **give me the rundown of it?**" Finally, you could also say, "Can you **give me the rundown about it?**"

The meaning does not change between these three prepositions. In all of the above questions, the speaker is asking for an explanation.

Here are a couple more examples with **to give someone the rundown**:

Karim: My friend is looking for someone to help her clean up around the house. Would you be interested in helping?

Sonia: Yeah, I'm interested. What are the details?

Karim: Well, she's busy with work so she needs help to do some housework. I'm not sure what she'll pay, but if you give her a call she can **give you the rundown**.

Sonia: OK, cool. Text me her number and I'll give her a call tomorrow.

Taylor: Have you seen Janet?

Ben: No, but she just called me to say she'll be 10 minutes late for our meeting.

Taylor: Oh, really? OK.

Ben: Should we get started without her?

Taylor: No. I want to **give you two the rundown** about the upcoming sales convention. Let's just wait for her to get here and then we can start.

Ben: No problem. Sounds good.

Jeez

Jeez is a very informal and casual expression that is used as an exclamation. It can communicate a wide range of emotions, including shock, anger, surprise, and humility. In this episode, Jessica uses **jeez** to convey the surprise that native English-speakers feel when they get a bad mark on the IELTS exam.

The expression **jeez** is a euphemism (a softer version of an offensive word) for *Jesus*. If said in the wrong context, the word *Jesus* can be a very offensive to some people. So although **jeez** is not offensive, using *Jesus* as a swear word can be quite offensive to some people.

Here are a couple more examples with **jeez**:

Scott: Wow. That's a beautiful painting above your fireplace. Who painted it?
Renee: I did, actually. About 5 years ago.
Scott: It's amazing!
Renee: Thanks.
Scott: No seriously. You're a very talented artist!
Renee: Oh, **jeez**! Would you cut it out? I have a little bit of talent but I'm not that good.
Scott: Well, I'm impressed! Paint me a picture sometime, will you?
Renee: Sure. That would be fun.

Ron: Did you have fun at the party last night?
Grace: Yeah! It was great.
Ron: How many people went?
Grace: There must have been at least about 20 of us.
Ron: **Jeez**! That's a lot of people to fit into that little apartment. The place must have been packed.

Face-to-face

In this episode, Jessica says that the speaking portion of the IELTS exam is taken **face-to-face** with an examiner. When you meet someone **face-to-face**, you meet them directly, in person. In other words, when someone takes the IELTS exam, they have to complete the speaking portion of the exam in the same room with the examiner. It cannot be completed over the phone or via computer.

So, if you are in close physical proximity to another person and you can see them easily, then you are hanging out with that person **face-to-face**.

Here are a couple more examples with **face-to-face**; one over the phone and one in person:

Emma: Hello?

Liz: Hey Emma. It's Liz.

Emma: Hey Liz. What's up?

Liz: I was just wondering how you're doing. We haven't chatted in forever!

Emma: Yeah. We have to get together sometime soon!

Liz: Do you have any time on Friday? It'd be great to sit down and have a **face-to-face** chat.

Emma: Works for me! See you then.

James: How's the job search going?

Yu-Jin: Pretty well! I had a phone interview yesterday and the company just called me back to set up a **face-to-face** interview this afternoon.

James: Oh, awesome!

Yu-Jin: Yeah. I'm crossing my fingers and hoping it'll go well.

James: You'll be great. Good luck!

A hard science

A hard science is a scientific discipline like chemistry or physics – one that involves taking precise measurements and making observations to learn about the nature of the universe. In this episode, Jessica says that students who study **a hard science** may be able to enter a university with a lower IELTS speaking score because in **the hard sciences**, reading and writing well is more important than speaking well.

Sometimes **the hard sciences** are called the physical sciences or the natural sciences. We refer to them as **hard sciences** because these scientific disciplines are practised very rigorously and thoroughly. They are held to high standards of methodology and objectivity.

A related term is *a soft science*. It is used to describe social science disciplines like sociology and anthropology.

So, **a hard science** is any discipline that is very theoretical and relies on the scientific method to learn about the universe. Usually, the term refers to chemistry or physics.

Here are a couple more examples with **a hard science**:

Trent: What do you do for a living?

Joan: I'm actually still a student.

Trent: Oh yeah? What do you study?

Joan: I'm majoring in physics.

Trent: Nice! My brother is in the **hard sciences** too. He's a chemist.

Joan: Cool.

Nick: I really believe that in order to make our country a better place, our government needs to invest more in science and technology.

Marco: Especially when it comes to education.

Nick: Absolutely. My son's high school doesn't have enough teachers who are trained in the **hard sciences**. Something really needs to be done about it.

Marco: Yeah, I agree!

To gear up for something

When you **gear up for something**, you get ready and prepared for it. In this episode, Andrew explains that All Ears English's IELTS study guides **gear students up for the IELTS exam**. The guides help students study and prepare for the test.

This figurative expression draws on the imagery of a machine with gears. Imagine a cyclist approaching a big hill. Before the cyclist climbs the hill, they get ready by changing the gear of their bicycle. This act of changing gears to prepare a machine (like a bike) for a task was the original use of this verb. These days, we use **to gear up for something** when we talk about someone or something getting ready or prepared to do something.

Here are a couple more examples with **to gear up for something**:

Lisa: How's work?

Cynthia: It's pretty busy these days.

Lisa: I guess you're **gearing up for the Christmas rush** down at the store.

Cynthia: Yup! December is our busiest month of the year!

Celeste: Do you have any plans for the weekend?

Daniel: I am going to get my bike ready for the spring.

Celeste: Oh, cool.

Daniel: Yeah. I'm getting **all geared up** to go for a big ride in May and I want to make sure my bike is in top shape.

Celeste: Sounds good!

Quiz

1. What does it mean if you're gearing up for something?

- a) You're searching for something.
- b) You're fixing a machine.
- c) You're getting ready.
- d) You're late.

2. Which of the following is NOT a hard science?

- a) astronomy
- b) anthropology
- c) chemistry
- d) physics

3. Which of the following expressions describes an in-person meeting?

- a) face-to-face
- b) head-to-head
- c) cheek-to-cheek
- d) hand-to-mouth

Quiz Answers

1.c 2.b 3.a

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