

# ***Speaking Skills***

***in the Academic Context***



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## Chapter 4: Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GA)

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Understand the marking criteria of Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GA) in IELTS Speaking test
- Distinguish features that lead to a higher band score
- Avoid common grammar mistakes

In the previous chapters, you have learnt the marking criteria of Fluency and Coherence (FC) and Lexical Resource (LR). In this chapter, we will focus on the marking criteria of Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GA) by looking at the features and errors made by candidates of different bands.

### Part I. What does Grammatical Range and Accuracy (GA) mean?

Grammatical Range and Accuracy in IELTS speaking test refers to the range and the accurate and appropriate use of the speakers' grammatical resource. The key indicators involved are the length and complexity of the spoken sentences, the appropriate use of subordinate clauses, and the range of sentence structures, especially to move elements around for information focus, the number of grammatical errors in a given amount of speech, and the communicative effect of error (*IELTS Home of the IELTS English Language Test*, 2019).

Check out this IELTS official video to know more about GA: <https://youtu.be/KGviA4pDHoI>

*How candidates perform in each Band? (IELTS Home of the IELTS English Language Test, 2019)*

#### Band 4

- produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare.
- errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding.

#### Band 5

- produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy
- uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems
- shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6

#### Band 6

- uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility
- may make frequent mistakes with complex structures though these rarely cause comprehension problems



## Band 7

- uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility
- frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist

## Band 8

- uses a wide range of structures flexibly
- produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/non-systematic errors

## Band 9

- uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately
- produces consistently accurate structures apart from ‘slips’ characteristic of native speaker speech

Here are the key indicators determining your marks in GA:

1. Range: Complex verb group
  - a. Emphatic ‘do’
  - b. Use of passive tense<sup>1</sup>
2. Range: Sentence structures
  - a. Coordinate clauses<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Subordinate clauses<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Inversion<sup>1</sup>


In IELTS speaking test, it is important to show your ability to use a range of complex verb groups and sentence structures appropriately. For complex verb groups, passive voice (*I love travelling when I'm allowed to*) and emphatic ‘do’ (*I do like wearing dresses*) are considered. For sentence structures, apart from coordinate clauses with connectives such as ‘and’ (*I love shopping and I sometimes spend too much*), ‘but’ (*she is a nice person but her sister isn't*), subordinate clauses are often the benchmark between higher bands and lower bands. Therefore, efforts should be put on practicing the use of relative clause (*The online shop which is accessible worldwide is very popular*; *He prefers shoes that come with many functions like water-proof and anti-slip*), adverbial clause (‘because’, ‘since’, etc.) and noun clause (*I think we'd better leave now*). Inversion (*So expensive was the ticket that we couldn't attend the show.*) is also another complex sentence structure that can be found in the performance of higher-achievers.

3. Accuracy: Number of errors

According to the IELTS speaking band descriptors, a 7.0-performance “frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist” (*IELTS Home of the IELTS English Language Test*, 2019). The examiners will look at whether you have consistently made the same mistake, such as inappropriate use of tenses in Part 2 which usually involves some

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to *Appendix 1: Glossary of grammar terminologies* for translated terms in Chinese



story-telling sentences. If the mistake can hinder the comprehensibility or even block communication, your mark in this part will be affected.

*Activity 1. Grammatical Accuracy*

Go to the corpus and use the ‘Browse’ function. Take a look at the GA performance of [Speaker 72](#) (Band 9.0). Can you find any grammar errors?

*Activity 2. Which is a better answer?*

Question 1: Tell me about the place you are living. (On Grammatical Range)

- A. I still live in the same neighbourhood I grew up in. It used to be a bit boring but now there are loads of shops and restaurants.
- B. I grew up in Wakra. I lived in a small house. Wakra was boring.

Question 2: Which relatives did you see most often when you were a child? (On Grammatical Accuracy)

- A. I used to see my grandparents four or five times a week because I go there after school when my parents are still at work but I don't see them as often now.
- B. I used to see my grandparents four or five times a week because I went there after school when my parents were still at work but I don't see them as often now.

(Reference from IELTS official lesson plans)

*Activity 3. Complex structures and Grammatical errors*

Go to the corpus and take a look at the performance of any Band 5.0 speaker. Can you list at least one subordinate clause and grammar error?

Subordinate clause:

Grammar error:

## Part II. What are the features of a high-band performance?

Now you know there are some key indicators in GA. How can these indicators be reflected in speakers' performance? Generally, speakers with higher Band (7.0 or above) can successfully employ various grammatical features such as complex sentence structures. Since they can manage complex grammatical structures, their speeches are usually easier to follow without many communication breakdowns. The table below has summarised a comparison between speakers of different Bands in terms of Grammatical Range and Accuracy.

	Features from speakers of Band 7.0 or higher	Features from speakers of Band 7.0 below
<b>Range</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Coordinate clause</li><li>✓ Adverbial clause</li><li>✓ Noun clause</li><li>✓ Relative clause</li><li>✓ Passive voice</li><li>✓ Emphatic 'do'</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Coordinate clause</li><li>✓ Adverbial clause</li><li>✓ Noun clause</li><li>? Relative clause</li><li>? Passive voice</li><li>? Emphatic 'do'</li></ul>
<b>Accuracy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Easy to follow ideas</li><li>✓ No communication blocks</li><li>✓ Minimum number of errors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>? Easy to follow ideas</li><li>? No communication blocks</li><li>? Minimum number of errors</li></ul>

### Activity 4. Searching the corpus

Question 1: In [Speaker 21](#), how many subordinate clauses have been identified? How many of them are noun clause, adverbial clause or relative clause?

Question 2: In [Speaker 31](#), how many subordinate clauses have been identified? How many of them are noun clause, adverbial clause or relative clause?

### Activity 5. What are the positive features?

Go to the corpus and use the ‘Browse’ function. Look at the general comments for any two speakers (one should be from Band 5.0 / 5.5 and another one should be from Band 8.0 / 8.5). What can you identify as positive features of a higher achiever?

	Positive Features
Speaker _____ Band _____	
Speaker _____ Band _____	

*Activity 6. What are the positive features?*


Go to the corpus and use the ‘Search’ function. After selecting the Band of speakers and ‘Grammatical Range and Accuracy’ as the criteria, how many types of positive features can you find? What are they?

*Example: Complex verb group (emphatic ‘do’)*

### **Part III. How to avoid common grammar mistakes?**

*Activity 7. What are the common errors?*

Go to the corpus and use the ‘Search’ function. After selecting the Band of speakers and ‘Grammatical Range and Accuracy’ as the criteria, how many types of errors can you find? What are they?



*Example: Adjective and Adverb error*

After learning the ways to demonstrate grammatical range in terms of complex verb groups and sentence structures, it is time to tackle the issue of accuracy. While you do not need to be 100% accurate to get a Band 7.0, avoid making the following mistakes especially in complex structures is a key to differentiate a Band-6.0 and Band-7.0 performance.

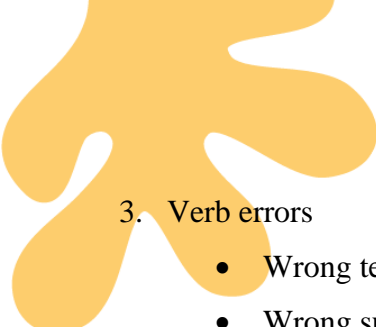
Common errors

1. Article and possessive errors

- Extra articles (a/an/the)
- Extra possessive pronouns (my/your/his/her/our/their)
- Extra possessive 's'
- Inappropriate articles (a/an/the)
- Inappropriate possessive pronouns (my/your/his/her/our/their)
- Missing articles (a/an/the)
- Missing possessive pronouns (my/your/his/her/our/their)
- Missing possessive 's'
- Confusion between articles (a/an/the) and possessive pronouns (my/your/his/her/our/their)

2. Noun and pronoun errors

- Wrong number (singular/plural)
- Extra nouns
- Extra pronouns
- Inappropriate plural forms
- Inappropriate pronouns
- Inappropriate pronoun forms
- Missing nouns
- Confusion between pronouns (subject/object/reflexive)



### 3. Verb errors

- Wrong tense or aspect
- Wrong subject-verb agreement
- Extra verbs 'to be'
- Extra verbs
- Extra modal verbs
- Inappropriate tense or aspect forms
- Inappropriate verbs
- Inappropriate negative constructions
- Missing verbs 'to be'
- Missing verbs
- Missing modal verbs
- Confusion between gerunds, infinitives and other verb forms
- Confusion between present participles (-ing) and past participles (-en/-ed)

### 4. Preposition errors

- Extra prepositions
- Missing prepositions

### 5. Conjunction errors

- Extra conjunctions
- Inappropriate conjunctions
- Missing conjunctions

### 6. Adjective and adverb errors

- Extra adjectives
- Inappropriate adverbs
- Wrong comparison forms
- Missing adjectives

### 7. Structural errors

- Wrong word order
- Missing subjects or objects
- Missing prepositional objects
- Missing relative pronouns (that/which/who/whom/whose)



- Confusion between phrases and clauses
- Confusion between subordinate clauses and questions

## 8. Other errors

- Extra words
- Meaning unclear
- Inappropriate words
- Common confusing word pairs
- Missing words

### Activity 8. Correct the errors

Go to the corpus and use the 'Browse' function. Check the script of any speaker, try to identify and correct the grammatical errors for them.

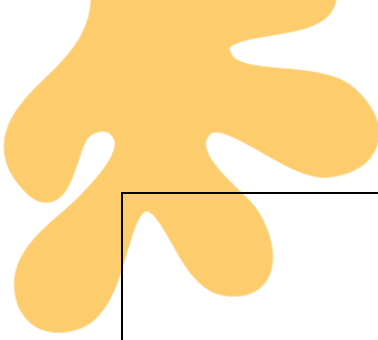
Example: [Speaker 12](#) (Band 5.5)

Now, I think maybe **one month a time** for... **go** out for ^ picnic. And because we are so busy and  
**(one time a month)** **(going)** **(a)**

I go to ... I go to Beijing for my university **study, se**, for h... in holiday, we, **we** fam, family all  
**(studies)** **(our)**

can ^ together and go to ^ picnic.  
**(be)** **(a)**

After correcting the errors, check your corrections with the corpus annotations. Any differences?



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*Activity 9. Practice complex structure*

Prepare a response to include subordinate clauses and complex verb groups from the [question bank](#). Identify which clause and verb group have been used in your script.

Part: 1 / 2 / 3 ( <del>delete</del> as appropriate) Question:
Your response:

Example:

Part: 1 / <del>2</del> / 3 Question: <i>Can you describe the place where you live?</i>
Your response: <i>I am currently living in an apartment <b>which I have rented since 2012</b>. It is a 300 square feet studio with an open kitchen and one</i>



bathroom. The building was constructed in 1988 so I'll say it's quite historical.

Complex verb group: Passive (was constructed)

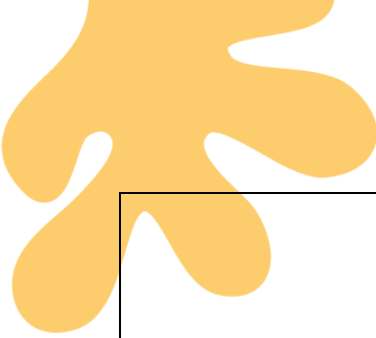
Subordinate clause: Relative clause (which I have rented since 2012) ; Noun clause (it's quite historical)

*Follow-up task: Mock test with the corpus*

Have a mock test with the videos [here](#). You are recommended to record yourself, either in video or in audio, during the mock test. Evaluate yourself based on the following form:

Key indicators	Occurrences
Complex verb group – Emphatic ‘do’	
Complex verb group – Passive	
Sentence structure – Coordinate clause	
Sentence structure – Subordinate clause	
Sentence structure – Inversion	
Error – Article and possessive	
Error – Noun and pronoun	
Error – Verb	
Error – Preposition	
Error – Conjunction	
Error – Adjective and adverb	
Error – Structural	
Error – Others	

If you have made any error, try to identify them as many as possible, and correct them based on the example in Activity 8.



Indicators:

Number of Complex verb group and sentence structure:

≤ 20: Below average

21 – 50: Average

51 – 80: Good

> 81: Excellent

Number of Error:

> 81: Below average

51 – 80: Average

21 – 50: Good

≤ 20: Excellent

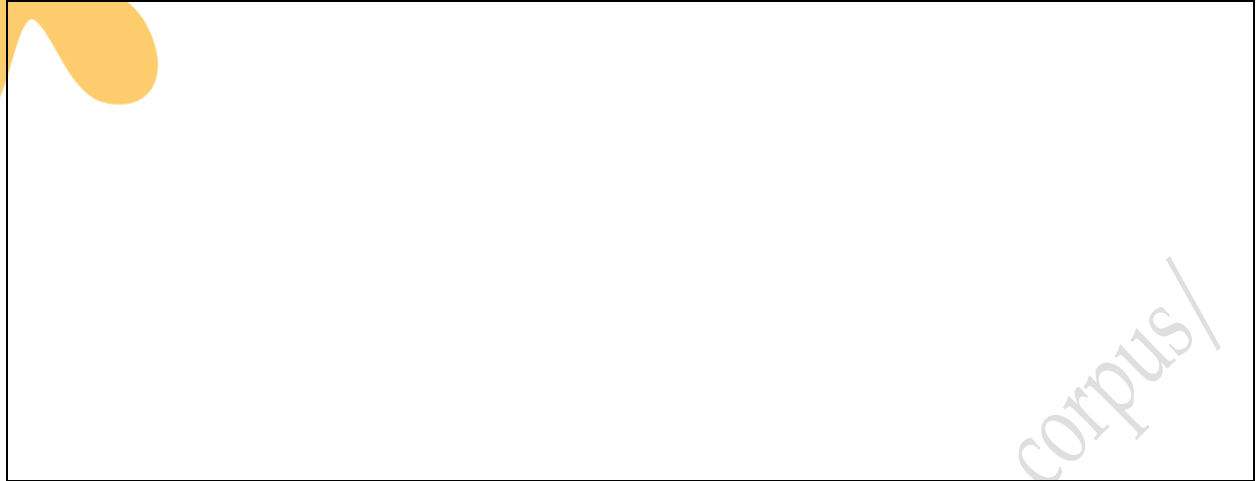
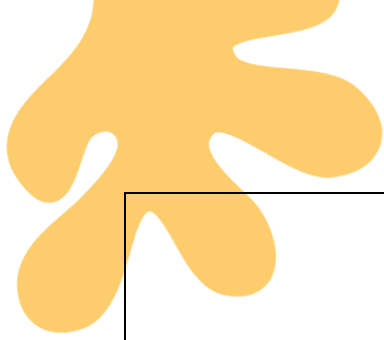
Share your performance with other learners and learn from each other at this link.

*Activity 10. Self-reflection*

Have you ever done any classroom presentation or delivered any free speech? How did you perform on Grammatical Range and Accuracy?

If you were given chances to re-do it again, how would you improve your performance with the skills you learnt in this chapter?





[https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english\\_speech\\_corpus/](https://corpus.eduhk.hk/english_speech_corpus/)





### **Teaching corner: Determine their levels**

Read the scripts from Part 2 below. Which bands do you think these speakers have attained?

#### **Speaker A**

One of the mo... one of the mo... the most memories find once when I saw is the movie called Coco, and it will be the published in the tw, twen, twenty, twenty eighty. And because the famous song in this movie is named Remember and I have... I have the chance to see it. And it... it was about a character to... and he... his grandpa, and al, also, also, about some music dreams. So, the first... first thing I think is very... is very touch me is because it's called his grandpa enou, enough time. Also, my grandpa die from a heart breaker and in accident. I don't have the time to see him. So, I see the... I see the, this... this actor in the... this movie, I think it's very tou, touch, and when I see I'm crying. The la, big thing is about their dreams. I also play piano in the really life. So, also I think it's very hard, and also my de, my families don't allow me to...

#### **Speaker B**

The most impressive building I saw is... I, I didn't literally saw it, but I saw like, the pictures and the model in a gallery, like, art gallery, in Sanlitun. The designer was called Michael or something, a f, a French guy. And it's a wine place, like, they have all kinds, all different kinds of wine in the building. And you know, the shape of the outside of the building is... They, they got the idea from when, when people pouring wine into a cup, so it's all like smooth streamline shape. And it's not like normal building that have, like, you know, straight, straight sides and edges. And it's kind of out of the box of normal design. And beside that, you know, that exhibition of the architecture have like, all kinds of different buildings, you know. Like, say, they have a small center. It was a idea. And it shows the process of the designing, like, from the start, like, what I saw is just scratching randomly, but I can see from step to step, from the scratch to the actual design. And like, another thing is, you know, how they have this different shape, and that makes a engineering and architecture part really difficult. So like, one of his building is like inverse cone that have like, only four square meters attached the ground, and the top is like 50 square meter or something. I don't know. I'm just guessing, but it was really impressive.



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