

## Study Tips for the Illinois Licensure Testing System (ILTS)

Teacher Education Program

Updated November 23, 2022

One requirement for licensure in Illinois is passing the ILTS content test in your program area.

In addition to having the appropriate content knowledge for your licensure area, to be successful on these tests, you must also use effective test taking strategies and techniques to manage test anxiety.

The School of Education has gathered resources on test taking and stress management to help you as you prepare for and take your content test.

These suggestions come from Teacher Education faculty, current and former candidates who have passed their content tests, test preparation websites and literature on test taking.

This test taking material is also available on [Canvas](#) and [Google Drive](#).

**About ILTS Tests.** [http://www.il.nesinc.com/Content/Docs/IL\\_AnnotatedScoreReport\\_ContentTests.pdf](http://www.il.nesinc.com/Content/Docs/IL_AnnotatedScoreReport_ContentTests.pdf)

- Test scores are reported on a scale from 100 to 300.
- Your scaled total test score is based on the number of multiple-choice questions you answered correctly.
- Each subarea score is also reported on a scale from 100 to 300 and provides feedback on your performance by subarea. This descriptive-only information may help you assess your strengths and weaknesses.
- Each multiple-choice question is weighted equally.
- There is no penalty for wrong answers.

**Teacher Education ILTS Preparation Links.** ILTS provides a great deal of information about the tests.

- Be sure to carefully review the section entitled *What's on the test? Test design and framework*.
- General links to review include:
  - [Three preparation videos](#)
  - [CBT Tutorials](#)
  - [Test-Taking Strategies](#) (includes study strategies as well.)
- Note that other students recommend taking the ILTS Practice tests ([ILTS Practice \(nesinc.com\)](#)) to understand question wording.

### Specific Test Links:

#### [Elementary 305](#)

##### Secondary Tests

[Biology 239](#)

[Chemistry 240](#)

[ELA 207](#)

[Math 208](#)

[History 246 \\*](#)

[Political Science 247\\*](#)

[SOA 249 \\*](#)

##### Middle Grades Tests

[MG Language Arts 201](#)

[MG Math 202](#)

[MG Science 203](#)

[MG Soc Science 204](#)

\*See specific suggestions for social science test taking on page 3.

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### General Study Strategies and Suggestions to Prepare for Content Tests.

All the tests interweave pedagogy with content so carefully review ILTS's objectives and examples. They are listed under the summary chart and table in the *what's on the test?* link for that subject area. You could develop a timeline to approach them, if that is helpful.

Other ideas include:

- Make flash cards of key terms from:
  - Teacher Education course notes and
  - Tables of Contents and indices of key texts
- Study strategies suggested by Blake and Shutt (2013):
  - SQ3R study technique:
    - Survey the material;
    - Question what you see;
    - Read the material with questions in mind;
    - Review the information acquired while reading;
    - Recite the information
  - Note taking skills:
    - Outlining
    - Graphic organizers (e.g. mapping)
    - **REST:**
      - Record what was read or heard;
      - Edit- condense notes by deleting irrelevant information;
      - Synthesize- note information that was stressed;
      - Think about the notes while studying the information)
- 240Tutoring. <https://www.240tutoring.com/>
  - Offers a 100% guarantee pass IF candidates follow their study/practice test requirements. As of November 2022, 240Tutoring has resources for the following ILTS tests:
    - Elementary 305
    - Middle Grades LA 201
    - Middle Grades Math (202)
    - Middle Grades Science (203)
    - Middle Grades Social Science (204)
    - Secondary Math 208
  - Anyone who wishes to purchase 240 Tutoring services can get a discounted rate of \$20 per month (regular price: \$39.99) by using this link: <https://study.240tutoring.com/subscribe/UIILSP>
  - Be sure to check the website before you make a purchase to ensure that they support your test since services may change.
  - Please note that the Teacher Education program does NOT receive any reimbursement for referrals to 240Tutoring services nor do we guarantee test results.

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Free videos from 240 Tutoring:

- [Teacher Certification Test Strategies and Tips - YouTube](#)
- [Effective Cramming - YouTube](#) (This one also has good general study tips for anyone, whether you are “cramming” or not. However, it does emphasize preparing in a short period of time.)
- Study.com <https://study.com/ilts/ilts-study-guides.html>. Costs vary depending on the package. Some study materials are free.
  - Teacher Ed students recommend study.com as a good source of test bank questions
  - Teacher Ed students find study.com’s literacy content material helpful for elementary tests. <https://study.com/academy/course/ilts-elementary-education-grades-1-6-practice-study-guide.html>
  - Be sure to check the website before you make a purchase to ensure that they support your test since services may change.
- Mometrix. <https://www.mometrix.com/>
  - Study guides in hard cover and e-versions for all of our ILTS tests EXCEPT for Sociology-Anthropology. The History and Political Science material is covered in the Social Science link. Biology and Chemistry in the Science link.
  - Link to review their ILTS material: [Best ILTS Study Guide for your ILTS Exam \(mometrix.com\)](#) Note that some of the general study material is free.
  - Link to purchase one of their guides: [ILTS Study Guide & Practice Test \[Prepare for the ILTS Test\] \(mometrix.com\)](#)
  - We have hard copies of the ELA 207, Math 208, and Elementary 305 study guides that you may borrow, and we will be purchasing guides for other tests in the near future. Contact Dr. Barrett ([nfbarret@uis.edu](mailto:nfbarret@uis.edu)) to reserve a copy to review.

### Additional Tips for Preparing for Social Science Tests:

1. Review key concepts in Political Science, Economics, History and Sociology-Anthropology since these tests address all of the social science areas.
2. Review basic texts in these subjects looking for key concepts in the table of content and the index.
3. Other students suggest reviewing the *Dummies* series (History for Dummies; Political Sci for Dummies, Econ for Dummies)
4. Other students have found the IPTS practice test (\$30) to be a good investment.
5. Also take a look at the resources on study.com <https://study.com/ilts/ilts-study-guides.html>. Other students have found them to be useful. If you decide to purchase their services, be sure to use the discount code: StudyPartner1.

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As a reminder: If you have a diagnosed learning disability, be sure to use any test accommodations that are available to you.

To prepare for the content test, you may find it helpful to develop an individual study plan, work with a study partner, or set up a study group. If you want help doing so, please contact Dr. Nancy Barrett, [nfbarret@uis.edu](mailto:nfbarret@uis.edu) School of Education's Assessment and Accreditation Coordinator or UIS's Learning Hub 217-206-6503, Brookens 462 (classroom side of Brookens Library) Email: [ctlmail@uis.edu](mailto:ctlmail@uis.edu)

### **Retaking a test.**

Despite your best efforts of preparation and planning, candidates sometimes do not pass a content test on the first attempt. While distressing, this should not be cause for alarm. Keep in mind that you have unlimited attempts to pass the test.

Although you will know as soon as you leave the testing site whether you passed or failed, we do not receive score reports until several weeks later.<sup>1</sup> While your first instinct might be to IMMEDIATELY sign up for another test if you find you have not passed, please resist that urge. Wait until you hear from us before you sign up to retake a test. That delay does two things: 1. it gives us a chance to talk about the test, and 2. it gives you a break from focusing on the test, which can reduce stress.

Know that your Teacher Education faculty and staff all want you to pass your content test and that we are here to help you do so.

If you have suggestions to share with other teacher education candidates, please forward them to me and I will add them to our resource file.

Please contact Dr. Nancy Barrett, [nfbarret@uis.edu](mailto:nfbarret@uis.edu), School of Education's Assessment and Accreditation Coordinator for test taking assistance.

Happy testing!

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<sup>1</sup> Note that we only receive your ILTS scores if you designate UIS as a recipient of your scores.

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### Managing Test Anxiety.

Not surprisingly, doing well on an ILTS test does not depend solely on your content knowledge and test preparation. Anxiety and stress play a role as well.

Downs (2017) provides an excellent set of study tips for medical students addressing test anxiety. We have adapted that list to meet the needs of aspiring teachers.

#### Before the Exam:

1. **Put things in perspective.** Remind yourself that your upcoming exam is important, but your entire future doesn't depend on this one test. Remember that you can retake an ILTS test as many times as you need to pass.
2. **Remind yourself of past successes.** Recall previous positive experiences you have had both on tests and in the classroom.
3. **Don't give a test the power to define you.** Your performance on an exam mostly depends on how effectively you study, the test-taking strategies you use, and how well you can manage test anxiety. These are all things that you can control, to some extent. Learning about the test and the type of questions that are asked can help in this regard.
4. **Visualize completing the test successfully** despite your anxiety. Use vivid images and play the entire "tape" in your mind – from the moment you wake up on the day of the exam to the moment you finish the exam.
5. **A certain level of anxiety is actually helpful** in performing your best.
6. **Use anxiety control strategies** to moderate your anxiety level if it becomes excessive. A simple Anxiety Control exercise is included in the next section.
7. **Take practice tests** and use them not only to work on test-taking but also to control your anxiety level. If you're afraid of not being able to finish the exam in time, do timed practice questions.
8. **Get a good night's sleep for several days before the exam.** With adequate sleep, your ability to think clearly and to deal with anxiety will both improve. You might try imagining yourself as a professional athlete: ask yourself how you would prepare yourself mentally and physically for an important game. Doing a moderate workout early in the evening (5:00 or 6:00) may help you sleep more soundly at night. If you often have trouble sleeping, consult your physician.
9. **Try imagining yourself as a professional athlete:** ask yourself how you would prepare yourself mentally and physically for an important game.
10. **Doing a moderate workout early in the evening** (5:00 or 6:00) may help you sleep more soundly at night.

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11. **If you often have trouble sleeping, consult your physician.**
12. **Reduce your intake of caffeine** the day of the test.
13. **Become familiar with the ILTS test process by reviewing the instructions.**
14. **Know how many questions and how much time you have to take the test.** That way, you can pace yourself during the test.
15. **Take a time-out.** Practice yoga, listen to music, meditate, get a massage, or learn relaxation techniques. Stepping back from the problem helps clear your head.
16. **Contact [UIS's Counseling Center](#)** (217) 206-7122 if you want to talk to a professional counselor about test anxiety and stress. (Available only for currently enrolled UIS students.)

### During the Exam:

1. **Get to the test site a little early.**
2. **Try to avoid talking with other students right before the exam.** (Their anxieties may increase your own.) Instead, take a walk around the building and silently talk to yourself, meditate, breathe, and/or pray. Moving your body can help rid you of some of the nervous energy you are experiencing.
3. **If possible, choose a seat in a place with few distractions** (probably near the front). You might also want to bring earplugs to limit distractions.
4. **Remind yourself that you don't know all the material** that could possibly appear on the test and nobody else does either. Still, you can do your best to get some "mileage" out of what you do know. And remember you only need a score of 240 out of 300 to pass.
5. **Expect a few curve balls** on the exam. Remind yourself that you're not expecting to get 100% on the exam; you only need enough points to pass! Also, your sense of what questions should appear on the test is not going to match perfectly with what the writer of the test had in mind. Therefore, when you encounter a curve ball on the exam, don't get upset and lose your concentration. Instead, you can either make an intelligent guess now or mark the question and return later.
6. **If you begin to have negative thoughts, say STOP** to yourself and remind yourself of past successes.
7. **If you continue to feel overly anxious during the test, use the following ANXIETY CONTROL PROCEDURE** to reduce your tension. This exercise is so simple that you may be skeptical about its effectiveness. However, many students have found that it really helps lower their anxiety to a level that is helpful rather than harmful.
  - Close your eyes.
  - Breathe in slowly to the count of seven and exhale to the count of seven.
  - Continue this slow breathing until you actually feel your body begin to relax. (Most people find that it takes 2 to 4 sequences.)

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- Open your eyes and give yourself a positive, very specific self-talk (i.e., "You're sure to do well. You studied hard. You're doing the best you can.") This whole procedure should take only about a minute and it is well worth the time.
8. **Move your body.** Roll your shoulders. Stretch your legs. Get up for a bathroom break if it's allowed.
  9. **Banish all thoughts of how well or poorly you might be doing** on the exam. It's hard to guess accurately, and thinking about your score will only increase your anxiety.
  10. **Work through the questions once** rather than rushing through the exam and leaving time at the end for checking. (Nervous test-takers are especially prone to changing correct answers to incorrect when they go back to check their answers.
  11. **Do not obsess about running out of time** on the test. Check the time periodically, but avoid checking too frequently, as this will only distract you and make you more anxious. It can be a better strategy to sacrifice a few points by not quite finishing the test than to rush through the last several questions and thus miss many points.
  12. **Approach your studying seriously, but think of the test as a game.** Your goal is to collect as many points as you can in the time available. Don't obsess about a particularly difficult question. If you're unsure of the answer, guess and move on. Remind yourself that you can miss several questions and still do well.

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### Works consulted

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