

TOPIC: ENVIRONMENT

Sample answers, useful
vocabulary and resources for
IELTS speaking exam

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References to teaching and authentic materials related to this topic: IELTS blogs, podcasts, videos and articles.

1. SAMPLE ANSWERS

PART 1

1. Which country are you from?

- I am from Russia. This is the largest country on Earth and therefore in itself is a **true marvel**, because it unites 8 times zones, dozens of nationalities, extremely beautiful and diverse nature.

2. Where is this country located?

- Russia is situated in the North of **Eurasian continent** and **stretches** from Europe to Canada.

3. Which part of the country do most people live in?

- The majority of people prefer to move to the capital – Moscow, where more than 14 million people **reside**, the second city is St. Petersburg that is so beautiful it has attracted 8 million people of residents.

4. What are the main industries in your country?

- The traditional industry that the whole economy is dependent on is **oil and gas mining**. The **balance of trade** of the country largely consists of the exports proceeds from selling oil all over the world.

5. What your city is famous for?

- I currently live in St. Petersburg – the city of stunning architecture, long history and extremely beautiful sceneries. It's a **destination of dreams** for thousands of people from all over the world and Russian remote regions specifically.

6. What kind of weather do you dislike?

- I think it's the long rainy days. I do enjoy a slight rain **every now and then**, but definitely not when it pours for days without any sun.

7. Would you prefer to live in a hot or cold country?

- Russia is huge, there are many climate zones, ranging from very hot to extremely cold ones. I had lived the majority of my life in Crimea – **one of the hottest regions**, so I think I need warmth more.

8. What is the best/worst weather for travelling in?

- Again, rain is not the weather I'd like to find myself in when I'm travelling. Everything gets wet too quickly, and it's difficult to carry an umbrella together with suitcases. However, both hot and cold days make travel **less enjoyable** as well.

PART 2

Describe an environmental problem that has occurred in your country. You should say:

- **The cause of the problem**
- **What effect it has had on your country**
- **The steps, if any, that have been taken to solve this**
- **Explain why you think this problem is so important to solve**

If there is one widespread **environmental problem** that is detrimental not only for Russia, but also for the whole world, this is, sadly, the **excessive pollution** of the country by domestic and industrial waste. Unfortunately, the most obvious reason for the pollution is irresponsibility of both citizens who do not care about **reducing the garbage** they produce, and the government who is extremely slow in developing ways of **waste recycling**.

The poor **waste management** is a huge problem in itself, but it naturally creates a chain of issues across industries, eventually **contaminating the essence** of our daily life. When there is nothing done to prevent and then – eliminate the trouble – it affects the air humans breathe, the food they consume, the environment they **come into contact with** every day.

Even though there are no working complex solutions from the state to reduce refuse from industries and recycle domestic waste, some tiny innovative startups try to **tackle the problem** by providing solutions in waste collection, sorting and even converting it to secondary materials. This is imperative for **sound development** of any nation that values **clean resources** and environment they live in.

PART 3

1. Do you think it is the responsibility of governments alone to protect the environment?

Definitely no, because it is everyone's responsibility to do what is possible to reduce the **burden** of human activity on the environment (**idea**). Sure, the government has the power to enact laws and craft policies, but the state machine is much slower compared to the development of projects born in corporations and startups (**explain**). However, not only the corporate and governmental entities should be **held accountable**, every citizen must be responsible for their own actions regarding **waste accumulation** and **disposal (alternative)**.

2. What measures can individuals take to protect the environment?

There are a lot of ways one can choose from when working **for the good of nature (idea)**,

- Everyone should turn off electric appliances when they are not in use (**example**).
- **Recycle** and segregate **biodegradable** and non-biodegradable waste or better yet avoid stop creating trash by avoiding **disposable products (example)**.
- Minimize one's water and electricity **consumption (example)**.
- Use a **fuel-efficient** car or better take a walk or ride a bicycle if the distance is not too large

These are just small things we can do to change our lifestyles, imagine millions of other people doing the same thing. It can gradually **make a difference (explain)**.

3. Do you think large companies and business organizations should be more environmentally friendly? Why?

Development is good; sometimes it is a necessity to survive in today's world. Businesses need profit, but they should not do so **at the expense of the environment (idea)**. **Sustainable development** is the key, the needs of the present have to be met without compromising the ability of future generations to sustain healthy and happy life on this planet (**explain**). One of the key initiatives of any industrial company should be to struggle against uncontrollable **depletion of resources (example)**.

2. KEY VOCABULARY

to recycle

to use objects or materials again after processing by converting waste into reusable material

It is possible to **recycle** cardboard into lower grade materials, such as paper.

to contaminate

to make something poisonous as a result of adding waste or chemical

The incentives strongly encourage oil **companies** to not contaminate the water supply.

to endanger

put (someone or something) at risk or in danger

It is a criminal offence to **endanger** the lives of the public by allowing the introduction of a contaminate into the mains supply.

air pollution

bad air quality that usually caused be harmful gases

According to a recent study, **air pollution** in Russia causes the death of approximately 4000 citizens per day or 1.6 million people per year.

soil pollution

the presence of toxic chemicals or man-made waste in soil

Plastics do contribute to **soil pollution**.

water pollution

is the presence of harmful materials in water, such as dissolved metals, waste from farms

Water pollution causes marine life to die.

to protect

keep safe from harm or injury

For more than 15 years, the nonprofit volunteer-run center has worked to educate the community to protect wildlife and their habitats.

conservation

the protection of a natural resource, usually by planned management, to prevent its depletion or destruction

I've decided to dedicate the rest of my life to **environmental conservation**.

toxic waste

waste products that are hazardous to the environment, people, animals

All of the military activity has left it a **toxic waste** hazard.

a greenhouse gas

a gas that contributes to the greenhouse effect by trapping heat above the Earth

Here is a list of habits each one of us can form to help reduce **greenhouse gas** emissions.

environmentalists

a person whose lifestyle, political choices are designed to minimize human impact on the natural environment

Environmentalists often encourage us to buy our food from local sources. They say it is good for the environment.

depletion

reduction in the number or quantity of something

Ground water **depletion** is a real and serious problem in many regions.

extinction

the complete disappearance of a species of plant or animal from the planet

Indeed, the most dramatic example of mass **extinction** known to biology has been caused by the introduction of an alien species.

fossil fuels

a natural fuel such as coal or oil, formed in the geological past from the remains of living organisms

Fossil fuels are at zero risk of running out in any timescale we care about.

carbon emission

gas produced by cars and factories that burn carbon and cause air pollution

The highest per capita **carbon emission** country is Qatar.

to impact

have a strong effect on someone or something

The project will **impact** the lives of young people in Shepway, between the ages of 10 and 20.

ozone layer

the gases in the stratosphere that protect the Earth from ultraviolet light through absorption of the most of the ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth from the sun

The **ozone layer** is continuously created by solar radiation impacting O₂ in the upper atmosphere.

wipe out

to kill in large numbers, to destroy something completely

The business eventually collapsed due to the myxomatosis which virtually **wiped out** the rabbit population.

animal rights activist

a person who works for social or political change in order to protect animals and make people treat animals well

The only real requirement for an **animal rights activist** is being vegan.

to breed

mate and produce off-springs

Other seabirds also **breed** there in moderate numbers.

creature

A living organism such as an animal, fish, or insect (not a plant)

The dormouse is one of our most secretive wild **creatures**.

to affect

to do something that produces an effect or change

The same events can **affect** people very differently.

marine

Related to the sea

Mackerel belong to the large family of **marine** fishes known as the Scombridae.

vulnerable

weak and defenseless; easily hurt Trada is the only Zoo in New Zealand breeding this **vulnerable** animal to help safeguard them against extinction.

absorb

to take in liquid or gas For plants to photosynthesize and produce sugars in their leaf cells, they need to **absorb** large amounts of carbon dioxide.

3. WORD FORMATION

depletion

noun

The combined effects of overpopulation, **resource depletion**, and environmental degradation will cause great economic losses.

to deplete

verb

The clearance of trees and vegetation **depletes** the soil, resulting in decreasing agricultural yields.

contamination

noun

There is no danger of long-term **contamination**.

to contaminate

verb

The incentives strongly encourage oil companies to not contaminate the water supply.

contaminated

adjective

He is ill as a result of eating **contaminated food**.

endangered

adjective

There are a few different ways that helping **endangered** species can be profitable.

to endanger

verb

It is a criminal offence to **endanger** the lives of the public by allowing the introduction of a contaminate into the mains supply.

to recycle	verb	It is possible to recycle cardboard into lower grade materials, such as paper.
recycling	noun	Recycling is not only good for environment, but it also creates so many jobs across many levels.
recyclable	adjective	Most businesses generate more recyclable waste than residual waste.
emission	noun	Drastic carbon emission reductions would undoubtedly be better for the atmosphere and climate.
to emit	verb	The new car emits less than 160g/km of CO ₂ .
degradation	noun	More and more farmers move to the city, as deforestation and agricultural degradation become ever more widespread.
to degrade	verb	Freshwater ecosystems have already been severely degraded .
biodegradable	adjective	Most plastic is not biodegradable .
degradable	adjective	Even the degradable plastics may break into fragments that litter the soil.
pollution	noun	Water pollution causes marine life to die.
to pollute	verb	Intensive use of pesticides and fertilisers seriously pollutes water, soil and air.
polluted	adjective	People are becoming more and more aware of the detrimental effects of living in heavily polluted areas.
conservation	noun	Energy conservations important for many reasons.

to conserve	verb	Our aim is to minimise energy consumption and conserve natural resources.
disposal	noun	The most effective disposal of bottles is through separation.
to dispose	verb	The best way to dispose the cell phone battery is to recycle it.
disposable	adjective	Disposable razor blades get dull from water corrosion.
hazard	noun	One of the most widespread natural hazards is flooding.
hazardous	adjective	Hazardous waste disposal can be a complicated process.
threat	noun	This could save the world from one of its biggest environmental threats .
to threaten	verb	Always look for hazards that threaten the environment.
sustainability	noun	Environmental sustainability is not an option - it is a necessity.
sustainable	adjective	Cities offer a far more sustainable lifestyle than suburban or rural areas.

4. COLLOCATIONS

ozone layer

toxic waste

endangered species

genetically modified

breeding in captivity

organic farming

fossil fuels

solar power

natural resources

wildlife conservation

global warming

conservation program

to get serious about climate change

genetic engineering

easily

completely

potentially

rain forests

observe natural behaviour

keep animals in captivity

animal rights activists

environmentally friendly

sustainable energy sources

one way to tackle the problem

carbon emissions

land degradation

air
environmental
marine
water
industrial
nuclear
nitrate
noise
vehicle
soil

cause
avoid
prevent
combat
control

fight
tackle
cut
limit
minimize
reduce
monitor

level
control
prevention
reduction
standards

a risk of pollution
a source of pollution

preserve
protect
safeguard
save
damage
harm
pollute

policy
protection
issues

conservation of the environment
protection of the environment
damage to the environment
harmful to the environment

pollution of the environment
have an impact on environment

dangerous
harmful
hazardous
poisonous
toxic

non-toxic
recyclable
industrial
domestic
household
nuclear

produce
dispose of
dump
get rid of
bury
process

recycle
reprocess deal with
handle
manage
cut down on
reduce

disposal
processing
recycling
reprocessing
treatment
management
minimization
reduction

5. USEFUL RESOURCES

THIS TOPIC ON IELTS BLOGS

- [IELTS Speaking Part 2: environment problem \[ielts-simon.com\]](#)
- [IELTS SPEAKING part 1, 2 and 3 sample questions \[ipassielts.com\]](#)
- [IELTS Environment vocabulary \[ieltsspeaking.co.uk\]](#)

PODCASTS

- [Star Talk Radio - Protecting Our Environment, with Gina McCarthy \[Soundcloud\]](#)
- [Yale University – On The Environment \[Soundcloud\]](#)
- [BBS Radio UK - Britain's Environment: The Debate\[BBC Website\]](#)

- [BBS Radio UK – China's Water Revolution \[bbc.co.uk\]](#)

ARTICLES

- [QUORA - Is it too late for us to do anything about global climate change?](#)
- [Huffington Post - Everyday Things You Aren't Recycling, But Should Be](#)

VIDEOS

- [Johan Rockstrom: Let the environment guide our development \[TED TALKS\]](#)
- [James Hansen: Why I must speak out about climate change \[TED TALKS\]](#)

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