

# IELTS Proficiency

Topic: Personal Experiences

## The Psychology of Overcoming Challenges

**Human life is full of difficulties.** Some are small, like missing a bus, while others are far more serious, such as losing a job or facing illness. Although these experiences are often painful, they also shape who we are. Many researchers believe that resilience, the ability to recover from setbacks, is not something people are simply born with. Instead, it is a skill that can be developed through practice and reflection.

One important part of resilience is learning from failure. People who face problems are often forced to think in new ways and look for solutions they might not have considered before. For example, someone who cannot find work in their field may discover different career options or build new skills. In this way, challenges can become opportunities to grow and even to change direction in life.

**Adapting to change is another key element.** Moving to a new country, for instance, can be frightening at first. The language, food, and customs may feel unfamiliar. Yet, many people later describe this type of change as a positive experience. Living in a different culture can broaden a person's outlook and help them understand others better. Studies suggest that those who accept change more easily often develop stronger problem-solving skills and greater confidence in themselves.



**Not all challenges come from outside.** Sometimes people must deal with inner struggles, such as stress, fear, or self-doubt. These can be just as difficult as external problems. Health experts point out that good coping strategies, such as doing exercise, practising mindfulness, or spending time with supportive friends, can make a big difference. Facing these inner challenges can also lead to higher self-awareness, because people learn more about their strengths and weaknesses.

Personal experiences often influence our values and beliefs as well. A student who fails an exam may realise that success is not only about talent but also about hard work and preparation. Someone who recovers from illness may begin to value health and family more than before. These lessons often stay with people throughout their lives and guide the decisions they make in the future.



**Of course, not everyone finds it easy to overcome difficulties.** Some people feel hopeless when problems seem too big or when they lack support. For this reason, communities and schools often encourage activities that build resilience in young people, such as volunteering, playing team sports, or joining creative projects. These activities provide safe spaces to practise problem-solving and cooperation. Later, when real challenges appear, young people are better prepared to face them.

In the end, personal experiences are more than just memories. They are a kind of training for life. By overcoming difficulties, adapting to change, and managing inner struggles, people gain skills that help them succeed in the modern world. Resilience is not only about “bouncing back” but about growing stronger. It is this ability to learn and grow from experience that allows us to face the future with greater confidence and hope.



## Glossary

- **resilience** (*noun*) (resilient, resiliently)

– the ability to recover quickly from difficulties.

*Example:* Many people show great resilience after losing their jobs.

- **setback** (*noun*) (setbacks)

– a problem that delays progress.

*Example:* Failing the exam was a setback, but she studied harder and passed next time.

- **recover from** (*verb phrase*) (recovery, recovered, recovering)

– to return to a normal state after a problem.

*Example:* It often takes time to recover from illness or stress.

- **adapt / adaptation** (*verb / noun*) (adapted, adaptable)

– to change in order to fit a new situation.

*Example:* She had to adapt quickly to life in a new country.

- **cope with** (*phrasal verb*) (coping, coped)

– to manage a difficult situation.

*Example:* Exercise helps people cope with stress.

- **self-doubt** (*noun*)

– lack of confidence in yourself.

*Example:* He felt self-doubt when starting his new job.

- **supportive** (*adjective*) (support, supported, supporting)

– giving help or encouragement.

*Example:* Friends and family can be very supportive during hard times.

- **outlook** (*noun*) (outlooks)

– a person's way of thinking about the future or about life.

*Example:* Living abroad gave her a more positive outlook on life.

- **confidence** (*noun*) (confident, confidently)

– belief in your own abilities.

*Example:* Speaking in public helped him build confidence.

- **cope strategies** / coping strategies (*collocation*)

– methods for dealing with stress or problems.

*Example:* Meditation is one of the coping strategies people use for anxiety.

- **perseverance** (*noun*) (persevere, persevered, persevering)

– continuing to do something despite difficulty.

*Example:* With perseverance, she completed the marathon.

- **self-awareness** (*noun*) (self-aware)

– understanding of your own character and feelings.

*Example:* Self-awareness can help people improve relationships.

- **broadens your worldview** / outlook (*collocation*) (broaden, broadening)

– makes you see life in a wider, more global way.

*Example:* Travelling often broadens your worldview.

- **hopeless** (*adjective*) (hope, hopeful, hopefully, hopelessness)

– feeling as if nothing can be done.

*Example:* Without support, some people feel hopeless about the future.

**keep  
Practicing**

## Fill-in-the-Gap Vocabulary Practice

**Complete each sentence with one correct word or phrase from the glossary.** Use the correct grammatical form where necessary.

1. When the company closed, she felt lost for a while, but her strong \_\_\_\_\_ helped her start her own business soon after.
2. Travelling alone often \_\_\_\_\_ and teaches you to respect different cultures.
3. He used meditation and deep-breathing as effective \_\_\_\_\_ during stressful exam periods.

4. It took him several months to \_\_\_\_\_ the disappointment of failing his driving test.
5. Parents should try to be \_\_\_\_\_ rather than critical when their children make mistakes.
6. Changing jobs every few years has made her more flexible and able to \_\_\_\_\_ to new situations quickly.
7. Even after several rejections, his \_\_\_\_\_ paid off when he finally got the job he wanted.
8. She sometimes struggles with \_\_\_\_\_ and doubts whether she deserves her success.
9. A positive \_\_\_\_\_ on life can make it easier to deal with everyday stress.
10. After years of therapy, he developed greater \_\_\_\_\_ and understood how his emotions influenced his actions.

Answer Sheet (Fill-in-the-Gap Activity — Personal Experiences)

1. resilience 2. broadens your worldview 3. coping strategies 4. recover from 5. supportive 6. adapt 7. perseverance 8. self-doubt 9. outlook 10. self-awareness

## IELTS Speaking Part 2 — Cue Card

**Describe a time when you faced a difficult challenge and managed to overcome it.**

You should say:

- what the challenge was
- how you dealt with it
- what difficulties you faced along the way
- and explain how you felt after overcoming this challenge



**Guidance**

## **Step 1: Identify the experience quickly**

Ask yourself:

- What situation can I describe that fits the question?
- Is it a real or realistic story that I can explain clearly?

*(e.g. starting a new job, studying abroad, learning a new skill, preparing for an important exam)*

## **Step 2: Set the scene (1–2 sentences)**

Ask yourself:

- When and where did this happen?
- What was happening in your life at that time?

*(e.g. "This happened three years ago when I moved to another city to study at university.")*

## **Step 3: Describe the challenge**

Ask yourself:

- What exactly was difficult about this experience?
- What emotions did I feel at that time?
- What problems or obstacles did I face?

*(e.g. "At first, I felt lonely and anxious because I didn't know anyone there.")*

## **Step 4: Explain how you dealt with it**

Ask yourself:

- What actions did I take to solve the problem?
- Who or what helped me?
- What personal qualities or decisions helped me succeed?

*(e.g. "I joined a language club to meet new people and improve my communication skills.")*

## **Step 5: Reflect on the outcome and lesson learned**

Ask yourself:

- What happened in the end?
- What did I learn from the experience?
- How did it change my outlook or confidence?
- (e.g. *"In the end, I became much more independent and confident. It taught me that adaptation takes time but is always worth it."*)

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