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The 7-Day Emergency Plan: Last-Week Triage for Band 7.0

What to diagnose, drill and leave alone on each of the seven days before your test — plus a printable day-by-day tracker.

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Contents

The 7-Day Emergency Plan: Last-Week Triage for Band 7.0

Part 1 — Why seven days changes the strategy

1.1 The mindset shift: banking, not learning

1.2 What this week can and cannot fix

Part 2 — What's changing in 2026

Part 3 — Day 7–6: Diagnose, don't guess

3.1 Don't skip the diagnosis

3.2 Reading the result: where does this week's time go?

3.3 The 80/20 allocation rule

Part 4 — Day 5–3: The highest-yield drills only

4.1 Listening and Reading

4.2 Writing

4.3 Speaking

Part 5 — Day 2: Consolidate, don't cram

5.1 Why new material now costs more than it gives

5.2 What to review instead

Part 6 — Day 1: The day before

6.1 Logistics, not study

6.2 Sleep over one more practice test

Part 7 — Test day morning

7.1 A short morning routine

7.2 The two or three patterns worth naming here

Part 8 — The printable 7-Day Tracker

The end

The 7-Day Emergency Plan: Last-Week Triage for Band 7.0

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What this book is

Seven days is not enough time to get better at anything you are not already good at. It is enough time to stop losing marks on things you already half-know.

This book is a countdown, not a course. It tells you what to do on each of the seven days before your test — what to diagnose, what to drill, what to leave alone, and what to do on the morning itself — so you walk in with your strongest possible score on the day you actually have, not the score a longer plan might have produced.

What this book is not

It does not teach you Listening, Reading, Writing or Speaking. Every technique this book points you to already has a full treatment somewhere else on this site — *The Band 7.0 Blueprint*, *The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0*, *Listening 7.0: The 30-Correct-Answers Playbook*, *Reading 7.0: The 30/40 Question-Type Priority Map*, *Band 7 Writing Task 2*, and *IELTS Speaking: Parts 1, 2 and 3*. This book's only job is to tell you, day by day, which of those to open and what to do with the hour you have.

It does not help you decide whether to book the test at all. *The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0*'s own Part 3 has a readiness checklist for that decision

— written for someone who still has weeks or months to choose from. This book assumes the test is already booked and seven days away. If you are still deciding whether to book, read that book first, not this one.

It does not replace a full treatment of test-day mistakes. Part 7 of this book covers the morning itself in two pages — enough to walk in without a self-inflicted error, not a complete diagnosis of every way a test day can go wrong. A dedicated book on that subject is planned for this site and is named again, briefly, at the point where this one hands off to it.

Who this is for

Someone with a test in exactly seven days, who has already been preparing and now has a fixed, short window left rather than an open one. If your test is further away, the stopping rules and self-tests in *The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0* are the right tool for a longer runway — come back to this book once seven days is the number on your own calendar.

How to use it

Each part is a stage of the week: Part 3 covers Day 7 and Day 6, Part 4 covers Day 5 through Day 3, Part 5 is Day 2, Part 6 is Day 1, and Part 7 is the morning of the test itself. Part 8 is a single printable page — a day-by-day tracker you can fill in with a pen as you go through the week. Read the book once, start to finish, on Day 7 morning; after that, open only the day you are on.

One honest note

Nothing in this book claims that following it raises your band score. Every habit and drill named here is stated as something that could help you keep the marks you have already earned under time pressure, not as a guarantee. A genuine skill gap will not close in a week, and this book does not pretend otherwise. It is for narrowing the gap between what you can actually do and what you show on the day, not for teaching you something new. Only an official test result tells you your actual band.

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Part 1 — Why seven days changes the strategy



1.1 The mindset shift: banking, not learning

With months of preparation ahead of you, the right move is often to learn something new — a question type you have not practised, a habit you have not noticed yet. With seven days left, that calculation flips.

The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0 builds its whole method around a stopping rule: work on a skill for as long as it changes your result, and stop once it does not. That book is written for someone with weeks or months still to spend. This book compresses the same idea to its hardest edge. A candidate with seven days has almost no room left for anything that does not already, reliably, produce marks.

That changes what "studying" should mean this week. New material — a question type you have never drilled, a grammar structure you are still shaky on — has a worse time-to-payoff ratio now than at any earlier point

in your preparation. It might have paid off with three more weeks behind it. It will not reliably pay off with three more days.

What does pay off this week is reinforcing the things you already half-know until they hold up under time pressure. The habit you sometimes forget when nervous. The question type you handle well four times out of five. The answer you can give, but not quickly enough.

The rule for this week: if a technique is new to you, leave it. If it is something you can already do, sometimes, drill it until you can do it reliably. Banking what you already have beats reaching for what you do not.

1.2 What this week can and cannot fix

Be honest with yourself about which kind of week you are having, because the plan only works if you are.

A genuine skill gap will not close in seven days — never having practised Task 2 essays under time, never having attempted a Listening section with plan-labelling questions, never having spoken for two minutes without stopping. No plan, this one included, changes that. If this describes you, the plan below still narrows the gap between your real level and your best-on-the-day performance. It will not turn a skill you have never built into one you can rely on.

What this week can fix is smaller and more common: marks lost not because you lack the skill, but because it does not show up reliably under pressure, under time, or when nervous. That gap — between what you

can do in a calm hour of practice and what you actually produce on test day — is exactly what a focused week of drilling and consolidation can close. The rest of this book is built for that gap, not the other one.

Part 2 — What's changing in 2026

The Band 7.0 Blueprint covers the full delivery-mode picture in its §1.4 — read that for the whole story of paper-based testing retiring worldwide from mid-2026, the Writing on Paper option, the UKVI computer-only track, and One Skill Retake. This book does not repeat any of that.

The one fact that matters for a seven-day plan specifically: **know, today, which delivery mode you are actually sitting.** Computer or paper changes how you should run Day 2's review (typed or handwritten) and what Day 1's logistics checklist needs to cover (whether you are bringing your own pen preference or relying on the one provided). Confirming this now, rather than discovering it at the test centre, is a five-minute check against your own booking confirmation — do it today, before Part 3 starts.

Part 3 — Day 7–6: Diagnose, don't guess



3.1 Don't skip the diagnosis

The single biggest mistake in a seven-day plan is spending it on whichever skill feels most comfortable to practise, rather than the one actually costing you marks. Comfort and cost are not the same thing, and under a real deadline they diverge more, not less — the skill you enjoy reviewing is rarely the one that needs the review.

The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0 already built the fastest honest diagnostic available: a per-skill self-test in its own Part 2, one section for each of Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. Run all four today, on Day 7. Together they take under two hours, and that two hours is the highest-value time you will spend all week — it decides where the other six days go. Do not skip this step because you already have a hunch about your weak skill. Hunches are wrong often enough, and a wrong hunch this week costs you the week.

3.2 Reading the result: where does this week's time go?

Once the four self-tests are done, read each result against what the rest of this site already knows about that skill's own structure.

Listening. If your self-test result points to a specific question type rather than a general weakness, *Listening 7.0: The 30-Correct-Answers Playbook* organises its whole treatment around the six official question types — find the one you are missing and go straight to that section on Day 5, rather than reviewing all six.

Reading. *Reading 7.0: The 30/40 Question-Type Priority Map* ranks Reading's eleven official question types by how many marks they typically carry. If your self-test flags more than one weak type, use that ranking to choose: the higher-yield type on the list is worth more of Day 5's time than the lower one, even if the lower one feels more urgent.

Writing. *Band 7 Writing Task 2* sets out the four marking criteria and shows a band 6 answer against a band 7 one, criterion by criterion. If your self-test essay lost marks across several criteria, don't try to fix all four this week — find the single lowest-scoring criterion and treat it as this week's target, the same "fix the floor, not the ceiling" logic *The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0* applies to whole skills.

Speaking. If your self-test recording matches one of the nine patterns in *The 9 Wrong Speaking Habits*, that habit is your target for Day 5. If it does not match any of the nine, the gap is more likely fluency or range than one nameable habit, and general Part 2/3 practice from *IELTS Speaking: Parts 1, 2 and 3* is the better use of the time.

3.3 The 80/20 allocation rule

Most candidates finish Day 7 with two skills flagged as weaker than the rest, not one. With five days left, resist the urge to split the remaining time evenly between them.

Put more of the week into whichever flagged skill is closer to already clearing your target band. A skill that is one small habit away from the line usually returns more marks per hour of drilling than a skill that is further behind — the same "spend limited time where it pays" logic *Reading 7.0's* own yield ranking argues at the question-type level, applied here one level up, at the whole-skill level. This is not a rule about which skill matters more in general. It is a rule about which skill is more likely to actually move in the five days you have left.

If both flagged skills are roughly equally far from the line, split the time evenly and treat Day 5 as the checkpoint — whichever one is responding faster to drilling gets more of Day 4 and Day 3.

Part 4 — Day 5–3: The highest-yield drills only

Three days, one drill block each, built directly from whatever Part 3's diagnosis flagged. Nothing here is a new technique — every fix is a named pointer to a full treatment that already exists elsewhere on this site. This part is a task list for the hour you have, not a lesson.

4.1 Listening and Reading

Listening and Reading share the same 30/40 mechanic and the same Day 7 diagnostic, so they share a drill day here too — split the day's time between them in the same proportion Part 3.3's allocation rule gave them, rather than automatically halving it.

The drill. Go back to the exact questions your Part 3 self-test got wrong. For each one, reread that question type's own trap-and-technique entry — *Listening 7.0's* per-type section for a Listening miss, *Reading 7.0's* Part 4 entry (full playbook or compressed, depending on the type) for a Reading miss. Then redo the self-test's flagged questions specifically, not a fresh full practice set. The point of this drill is not more exposure to the skill in general; it is checking whether naming the trap changes whether you fall into it a second time.

If the same trap catches you again, that is useful information, not a failure — it tells you the habit needs one more repetition on Day 4, using a different set of questions of the same type rather than the same ones memorised.

4.2 Writing

The drill. Write one full timed Task 2 essay, using the question type Part 3.2 flagged as your weakest, under real conditions — the actual 40 minutes, the actual delivery mode you confirmed in Part 2 (typed with no spell-check, or handwritten, matching what you will do on the day).

Mark it yourself immediately afterward against *Band 7 Writing Task 2's* own band 6 vs. band 7 table, criterion by criterion, focusing only on the single criterion Part 3.2 identified as your target. Do not try to fix every criterion in one essay this week — that is the same spread-too-thin mistake *The Minimum-Effort Path to 7.0* warns against for whole skills, happening here inside a single essay instead. One essay, one criterion, one honest self-mark.

4.3 Speaking

The drill. Record yourself answering one full Part 2 topic and at least two Part 3 follow-up questions, using a topic from *IELTS Speaking: Parts 1, 2 and 3* you have not specifically rehearsed before — a rehearsed answer tells you how well you can perform a script, not how you actually speak under pressure.

Play the recording back once, listening specifically for the habit Part 3.2 flagged. If your self-test matched one of the nine habits in *The 9 Wrong Speaking Habits*, that book shows the band 7 alternative right next to the band 6 version of the same moment — practise producing that alternative on the next answer, not just noticing the habit after the fact. If no specific habit matched, use the recording to check fluency and range instead: how often you pause to search for a word, and whether your answers stay at roughly the same length and level of detail across different topics.

Part 5 — Day 2: Consolidate, don't cram

5.1 Why new material now costs more than it gives

By Day 2, the time-cost of learning anything unfamiliar has crossed over the plausible benefit. There is no longer enough runway to practise a new technique until it holds up under pressure — at best you add a half-learned habit that competes with the ones you actually trust, which is worse than not touching it at all. This is not a warning about running out of energy. It is the same "stop once it stops paying" rule from Part 1.1, arriving at its final, sharpest edge.

5.2 What to review instead

Go back over your own flagged answers from this week's three drill days — the specific Listening and Reading questions you missed twice, the Writing criterion you targeted, the Speaking habit you were working on. The point of Day 2 is recognition, not new practice: read through what tripped you up this week and confirm you can still name why, without doing a fresh timed drill.

If you have been keeping a running note of your own mistakes across this week — even an informal one — this is the day to reread it start to finish. Fifteen minutes reviewing your own error patterns is worth more today than another hour of general practice.

Keep today light. One short pass over this week's own material, then stop.

Part 6 — Day 1: The day before



6.1 Logistics, not study

Today is not a study day. Spend it on the things that have nothing to do with your English and everything to do with whether the test goes smoothly.

Confirm your test centre's exact location and how long it actually takes to get there — not the estimate you made when you booked, a fresh check against today's transport. Lay out the identity documents your booking confirmation requires. Check the delivery mode you confirmed back in Part 2 one more time, and if you are handwriting under Writing on Paper, make sure you know what to bring; if you are on computer, there is nothing to bring for that part beyond yourself.

None of this takes long, and all of it removes a way the day could go wrong that has nothing to do with your actual English.

6.2 Sleep over one more practice test

There is a real temptation, the night before, to run one more full practice test "just to be sure." Resist it. The marginal benefit of one more timed set at this point is small, and it is small specifically because you have already spent five focused days getting your existing skills to hold up under pressure — a sixth day of drilling is unlikely to add much, and a poor night's sleep costs you attention and composure that no amount of extra practice buys back.

This is a trade-off, stated plainly, not a judgment on anyone who studies late anyway: sleep is very likely to help you more tomorrow than one more practice essay or one more Listening set. Choose sleep.

Part 7 — Test day morning

7.1 A short morning routine

Arrive with enough margin that a delayed bus or a wrong turn does not turn into a rushed start — earlier than you think you need to. While you wait, do a light warm-up rather than new practice: read one short passage in English, or say a few sentences aloud about your morning so far. The goal is switching your brain into English mode, not squeezing in one more study session.

If you notice nervous energy building in the waiting room, that is normal and does not need fixing — it does not mean you are unprepared. A few slow breaths and a reminder that you have already done the preparation this week is enough; it is not a moment for reviewing notes or running through worst-case scenarios.

7.2 The two or three patterns worth naming here

This section is a short preview, not a full treatment — a dedicated book on test-day mistakes is planned for this site and will cover the subject properly. Three patterns are common enough to name briefly here, each with a one-line fix.

Rereading a Reading question over and over instead of moving on. If a question is not resolving after roughly a minute, mark your best guess, flag it, and move to the next one — the skip-and-return habit *Reading 7.0's* own Part 6 already argues for, worth remembering under real pressure and not just in practice.

Running out of time on the final Speaking question because an earlier answer ran long. Part 3's discussion questions are meant to be answered at a similar length to each other; if you notice yourself giving a much longer answer than the question calls for, that is the moment to wrap up cleanly rather than let it run.

Letting one bad answer or one missed question change how you approach the rest of the test. A single weak moment in any section does not determine your overall score, and treating it as if it does is more likely to cost you the next question than the one you already answered. Notice it, let it go, and move on to what is actually in front of you.

Part 8 — The printable 7-Day Tracker

Print this page, or copy the grid onto paper, and fill it in with a pen as you go through the week. One row per day. Write the day's focus skill in before you start, tick the drill box once it's done, and before bed rate your own confidence from 1 (still shaky) to 5 (solid under time).

Day	Focus skill	Drill completed	Confidence (1–5)
Day 7		☐	
Day 6		☐	
Day 5		☐	
Day 4		☐	
Day 3		☐	
Day 2		☐	
Day 1		☐	

A confidence rating that isn't climbing across the week is worth noticing on its own — it's a sign to give that skill more of the time you have left, the same allocation logic from Part 3.3, checked against how the week is actually going rather than only your Day 7 guess.

The end

You started this week with seven days and a test already booked. If you followed the plan, you spent Day 7 finding out exactly where your time would pay off instead of guessing, three days drilling only the highest-yield fixes, Day 2 consolidating instead of cramming, and Day 1 on logistics and sleep instead of one more practice test.

None of this replaces the weeks of preparation that came before it. What it does is make sure that preparation actually shows up on the day — that a habit you can already do sometimes becomes one you can do reliably, under time, when it counts.

About the drills. Nothing in this book teaches a technique from scratch — every drill points to a full treatment already published on this site. If a drill did not make sense on its own, the book it points to is where the explanation lives.

About the promise. Nothing here is a guarantee. Every habit and drill in this book is stated as something that could help you keep the marks you already have under pressure, not as a fixed amount of score improvement. Only an official test result determines your actual band.

Good luck with the test, and with whatever it is a step toward.

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