

Live Lesson Notes

Festivals

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What you will learn in this worksheet:

Warm up questions
Useful vocabulary
What is your favourite festival?
How do you celebrate?
Idioms to talk about festivals
Model Answers
Useful links

Useful Links

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Introduction

In this free IELTS Speaking lesson on the topic of Festivals, you will learn how to talk about your favourite festival and how you celebrate it.

[Watch the complete video about this topic of Festivals here.](#)

Warm Up Questions

These are the kind of questions on this topic of Festivals that you might find in IELTS Speaking.

Speak out your answer to the following questions!

What is your favourite festival?

How do you celebrate this festival?

Should festivals adapt with the times?

Useful vocabulary

Here is some useful language to talk about the IELTS Speaking topic of Festivals

Festival (n.) = celebration of a special event (often religious)

Festival (n.) = a series of events, (music, film, drama)

The festival **is held in** Germany **in** August

This festival **takes place** ____

It **commemorates** the birth of Christ

It celebrates the

Festive (adj.)

A festive occasion

To be **in** a festive **mood**

The festive season

Festive decorations

Festivities (n.) (Plural) = celebrations

I hope you enjoy the festivities

The festivities go on for days

Feast (n.) = a big meal

I love Christmas dinner, it is an absolute feast

What is your favourite festival?

Festivals Around The World that you told me you celebrate:

- **Eid Al-Fitr / Eid Al-Adha** (many countries)
- **Diwali** in India
- **Tết** Vietnam
- **Pôhela Boishakh** Bangladesh
- **Semana Santa**, (many Spanish-speaking countries)
- **Dia de los Muertos**, Mexico
- **Sinulog** Philippines
- **Carnival** (Brasil)
- **Chinese New Year**
- **Holi**, Rajasthan, India
- **Songkran Festival**, Thailand
- **Christmas** (many countries)
- **Festival of Lanterns**, Japan

How do you celebrate?

Here are some useful phrases you can use to answer this question

We **celebrate** by eating _____

It's a **tradition (n.)** to eat _____

It's **traditional** (adj.) to eat _____

When describing **food**, you can use these adjectives.

- lavish
- amazing
- tasty
- delicious

We like to eat **local delicacies** (=special food from that area)

Synonyms of '**eat**'

We like to _____ local delicacies

- Pig out on
- Devour
- Enjoy
- Sample

Festivals usually involve people **coming together** to celebrate. Here are some phrases we can use for this.

- We have a family gathering
- The family gets together
- We have a get-together with family and friends

*In order to describe the **reason** for a festival, you could say,*

- **It's a chance to** remember _____
- It's a chance to show gratitude (=to be thankful)
- It's a chance to share happiness and joy
- **It's an opportunity to** visit relatives / the extended family
- **It's a nice occasion for us to** exchange gifts

There are / is ...

- (Street) Parades
- Processions
- Floats in the street (trucks that carry things)
- Dancing in the street (N.B. not street dancers!)

Some festivals involve throwing things, from water or colourful powders, to tomatoes or even money.

*Notice how we use the verb '**throw**.*

We **throw** snowballs **at** each other (*the intention is to hit someone*)

We **throw** balls **to** each other (*the intention is for the other person to catch it*)

To describe the atmosphere, we can talk about...

- There's a real **party atmosphere**
- There's a **feeling of fun**
- There's an **ambience of** peace and love

Festivals - Are they a waste of time?

YES

Many festivals have become **over-commercialised / highly commercialised**

We have forgot **the origin of the festival**

We neglect (=pay no attention to) the real meaning behind the celebration

NO

That said, it's a **great chance to** relax and **catch up with** extended family and friends

It gives us a break from the mundane routine

Festivals play a vital role in **passing down / on** our traditions to our children

Idioms to talk about Festivals

The following all mean to have a good time

I usually **have a ball** at this festival, throwing water at everyone!

I **have a whale of a time** at Christmas

I **had the time of my life** at the last Holi festival

Here are some more useful idioms you could use when discussing this topic.

This festival is **as old as the hills** = *very old*

The family dinner is really something to **feast your eyes on!** = *makes you happy to look at it.*

Uncle Tom is always **the life and soul of the party** at New Year's = *the most active person at a party*

I spend so much money on presents and organising the parties, but I need to be careful not **to break the bank** = *spend too much*

The festivities **went like a dream** = *go smoothly*

Model Answers

What don't you like about celebrating a particular festival?

I am gonna talk about Christmas because on the one hand, I love **celebrating Christmas but it is a festival that** has certain aspects that **I am not particularly fond of.**

I guess it's to do with the **over-commercialisation** of Christmas.

That we've moved from **celebrating** the birth of Christ to **the obsession with the gift-giving.**

Now, I understand that gift-giving is **a way to commemorate** the three wise men who gave gifts and presents to baby Jesus, but it seems like **we've swung too far** and now we focus too much on giving gifts and what's more, it's really hard to find an imaginative and special gift for your family and friends because me, **for me personally**, it's really hard to choose gifts for those people and **we often end up** buying the same kind of gifts, socks, woolly jumpers, scarves and hats, because of course we celebrate in winter. So often the same gifts, and it doesn't seem to be **as meaningful as it used to be when I was a child**

Describe the most impressive festival in your country

Well, **it's hard to say** exactly which is the most impressive festival because of course, there are, like many countries, **a myriad of different festivals that we celebrate** in the UK.

If I were to choose one, I think, **I would opt for** bonfire night.

So, bonfire night **is celebrated on** the fifth of November. It's a **nationwide celebration** and **it dates back to** several hundred years ago when somebody tried to blow up the houses of parliament and destroy the democratic processes in our country.

So **we celebrate the fact that** they failed to do that and, so what we do is, **the way we celebrate is**, people like to set bonfires or little fires in their garden in the evening and **the family gather around** the fire to keep warm.

There's lots of **local delicacies**, you know, **lavish feasts** and cuisines that we enjoy.

I remember when I was a child, we had black beans soup, we had roast potatoes, jacket potatoes, toffee apples...so **sweet and savoury delicacies** which were really delicious.

I guess on top of that, we also make effigies. So **there would be some**

processions around the streets where we would carry our effigies of the person who tried to blow up the houses of parliament.

His name was Guy, Guy Fawkes, and we can carry the effigy around and then we throw it on top of the bonfire

which is, **when you think about it**, it's quite horrific with burning this person, but **it's a symbol I guess**, to remember the victory against what that person tried to do.

I think, I think it's the most impressive festival because the lights, and the colour and the fire and the fireworks, which we also have just **give a whole an ambience of excitement** and you know, **you're on the edge of your seat** like the whole evening and the colours are just fantastic.

So for me, that's probably the most impressive festival in my country.

How have festivals changed recently?

That's a very interesting question, and I haven't thought about it, to be honest. Let me think.

I think, on the one hand, festivals haven't changed that much because **they represent tradition** and we like to, you know, **pass down these cultural values** to our children

and so we like to **preserve the tradition** and keep festivals very much as they were a hundred years ago.

But on the other hand, there are, I think many **festivals have changed with the times**, and have adapted **in a positive way**, and sometimes **in a negative way**, to the modern times.

For me, a positive way is that **they have been updated** and **made relevant to young people**.

So maybe for example, at the Christmas mass at church we have lots of singing and guitars, and rock music which makes it relevant to a lot of young people but the message is still there.

I suppose, in a negative way, **as I mentioned earlier** in the test, the **over-commercialisation of festivals** like Christmas and Easter where people are just spending so much money, it's become a business.

We fork out lots of money (*=spend a lot of money*) on things that we don't really need to celebrate but it's good for the economy, it's good for businesses, so long as we don't forget the **real spirit of the festival**.