

Family Vocabulary

Topic vocabulary for the IELTS exam

* Important

- Do **not** try and learn this list of vocabulary.
- Identify the vocabulary you find useful for answering practise questions about the family.
- Record these in your vocabulary notebook and practise using them regularly.

Set 1: Types of family

family – a group of people who are related to each other

- Mohit was very nervous when he met his girlfriend's **family** for the first time.

immediate family – your closest relations, such as your parents, children, husband or wife

- My **immediate family** are my dad, mum and two sisters.

nuclear family – parents and their children

- The average **nuclear family** in the US is made up of parents and two children.

extended family – a family unit that includes grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, and uncles, etc. in addition to parents and children

- I have a large **extended family** with many nieces, nephews and cousins.

dysfunctional family – a family that is not behaving or working normally, where there is conflict, misbehaviour, etc.

- Cynthia came from a **dysfunctional family** and could often be seen wandering the street on her own when she was young.

Set 2: Family members - general terms

family member – someone who belongs to a specific family

- I have **family members** living all over the world.

to be related to – to belong to the same family as

- I'm **related to** many people in my village as my family has lived here for generations.

a relative – someone who is part of your family

- We are going to visit **relatives** who live on the coast for our holiday this year.

blood relative – someone you are related to through birth rather than marriage

- Aunt Sylvia is my **blood relative** but Uncle George, her husband, is only related to me by marriage.

distant relative – generally, a relative who is a third cousin or greater, or a great aunt or uncle, especially when you have little or no involvement with him or her.

- A member of my family died last week but they were a **distant relative** and I didn't know them very well.



next of kin – the person or group of people you are most closely related to

- When you apply for a passport, you have to name your **next of kin** in case there is an emergency while you are away travelling.

descendants – a person who is related to you and who lives after you, such as your child or grandchild, and all future generations

ancestors – family members from past generations

- I'm writing my autobiography so that my **descendants** will know what life was like for one of their **ancestors**.

household – all the people who live in one house

- There are now only three people in my **household** as my older brother has gone away to university.

Set 3: Immediate family

father – a man in relation to his child or children

mother – a woman in relation to her child or children

parent – father or mother

husband – the male partner in a marriage; a married man

wife – the female partner in a marriage; a married woman

spouse – a husband or wife

son – a person's boy child

daughter – a person's girl child

brother – a male who has the same parents as another person

sister – a female who has the same parents as another person

big brother / older brother (or sister) – older than you

little sister / younger sister (or brother) – younger than you

- I have two **younger sisters** but I do wish I had an older brother.

sibling – a brother or sister

- I have three **siblings**, two brothers and a sister.

twin – either of two children born to the same mother on the same occasion

- My sister has just given birth to **twins**, a boy and a girl.

identical twins – twins who look exactly the same

- I have an **identical twin** brother and even our parents find it difficult to tell us apart.

an only child – a child who doesn't have any brothers or sisters

- It can be lonely being an **only child** as you don't have siblings to play with.

Set 4: Extended family

uncle – the brother of your mother or father

aunt – the sister of your mother or father

nephew – the male child of your brother or sister

niece – the female child of your brother or sister

cousin – a child of your uncle or aunt



grandparents – the parents of your parents
grandfather – the father of your mother or father
grandmother – the mother of your father or mother
grandchildren – the children of your children
grandson – the son of your son or daughter
granddaughter – the daughter of your son or daughter

Set 5: In-laws

in-laws – the relatives of your husband or wife
- When we were first married, we couldn't afford a place of our own so lived with the **in-laws**.
mother-in-law – mother of your spouse
- Many people don't get on with their **mother-in-law** but mine is really nice.
father-in-law – father of your spouse
- My **father-in-law** offered me a job in the family business so he is also my boss.
son-in-law – the husband of your daughter
- I didn't like Amir when I first met him but he's a great **son-in-law** and helps me out whenever I need it.
daughter-in-law – the wife of your son
- We are very happy that our son has decided to marry Zehra and look forward to her becoming our **daughter-in-law**.
brother-in-law – the husband of your sister
- My **brother-in-law** is lazy and not a very good husband to my sister.
sister-in-law – the wife of your brother
- I often help my **sister-in-law** to look after my baby niece.

Set 6: Stepfamilies

step – in the context of family relationships, 'step' means that you are related to the person because of one of your parents marries one of their parents
stepmother – the wife of your father, but not your biological mother
stepfather – the husband of your mother, but not your biological father
stepson – the son of your new wife or husband, but not your biological son
stepdaughter – the daughter of your new wife or husband, but not your biological daughter
stepsister – the daughter of your stepmother or stepfather
stepbrother – the son of your stepmother or stepfather
half-brother – a brother you have only one parent in common with
half-sister – a sister you have only one parent in common with

Set 7: Parenting

parent – a person's father or mother
- I'm glad that my **parents** live close by as it's easy to visit them.
motherhood – the state of being a mother
- I'd like to have children one day but I'm not ready for **motherhood** yet.



fatherhood – the state of being a father

- Sakda is taking the responsibilities of **fatherhood** seriously and now only goes out drinking with his friends once a month.

to start a family – to have children

- Billy and I are planning to **start a family** as soon as we get married.

to give birth – to have a baby

- It was a special moment in Cesar's life when he saw his wife **giving birth** to their first child.

offspring – a person's child or children

- My two sisters are coming over later with their **offspring** so the house is going to be very noisy.

family man – a man who enjoys being at home with his wife and children

- Deepak used to love partying but now that he has kids he's become a real **family man**.

family life – the kind of life a person normally leads when they are married and have children

- My husband and I enjoy doing lots of activities with our children and we all have a great

family life together.

to raise (a child) – to take care of a child until they become an adult

- It's a big responsibility **raising** children but I love being a parent.

to bring up (a child) – to raise a child

- When Jae-min's husband died, she was left to **bring up** the children on her own.

upbringing – the way in which you are treated and educated when young, especially by your parents

- I was fortunate to have a good **upbringing** but not all children have caring parents who look after them well and teach them the right way to behave.

to support (a family) – to have enough money to be able to look after a family

- Egor earned very low wages and had to work two jobs to **support** his family. **breadwinner** – the member of a family who earns most of the money that the family needs

- In many countries, men are expected to be the **breadwinner** in a family.

dependant – someone who depends on you for financial support, such as a child or family member who does not work

- I'm working hard to get a promotion and earn more money now that I'm a husband and a father and have **dependants** who rely on me.

to adopt – to legally take another person's child into your own family and take care of them as your own child

- Paul and Siri were unable to have children of their own and decided to **adopt** a baby.

to foster – to take care of someone else's child, usually for a limited time, without becoming the child's legal parent

- Even though I'm an only child, I always had other boy's and girl's to play with when I was growing up as mum and dad often used to **foster** other children.

over-protective parents – a parent who protect their child too much

- **Overprotective parents** can prevent their children from building confidence and independence.



spoilt child – a child who shows bad behaviour because they have been allowed to do or have anything they want

- I don't like playing with the girl next door because she's a **spoilt child** and gets in a temper if I don't let her win all the games.

single parent – a person bringing up a child or children without a partner

- My sister is a **single parent** now that her husband has left her.

stay at home parent / **stay at home mum** – a parent who stays at home to take care of their children rather than going out to work

- These days, it's far more usual for men to be a **stay-at-home parent** than when I was young when it was always the mother who looked after the kids.

to look after – to take care of

- I'm going to **look after** my daughter's children on Saturday while she has a day out with her friends.

childcare – the care of children, especially by a crèche, nursery or childminder while parents are working

- **Childcare** is a big problem for many working parents and they are lucky if their own parents can help out.

strict – strongly limiting someone's freedom to behave as they wish, or likely to severely punish someone if they do not obey

- My parents are very **strict** with me and I have to finish all my homework before I'm allowed to play or watch TV.

authoritarian – demanding that people obey completely and refusing to allow them the freedom to act as they wish

- My father was very **authoritarian** when I was growing up and I was terrified of him.

Set 8: The Generations

generation – all the people of about the same age within a society or within a particular family

- It's hard to believe how much everyday life has changed for my grandparent's **generation**.

older generation – people of middle-age and older

younger generation – young adults, teenagers and children

- The **older generation** are often stuck in their ways, while the **younger generation** welcome change.

generation gap – a difference of opinions between one generation and another regarding beliefs and attitudes, often leading to a lack of understanding between them

- It's a skilled politician who can bridge the **generation gap**.

teenager – a person aged between 13 and 19 years

- My lovely little boy turned into a rebellious monster when he was a **teenager** but now he's a lovely young man.

adolescent – a young person who is developing into an adult

- Many **adolescents** develop emotional problems as they try to find their place in the world.



Set 9: Other vocabulary

sibling rivalry – the feeling of competitiveness that often exists between brothers and sisters
- There was huge **sibling rivalry** between my two brothers and they were always fighting but they are the best of friends now that they're adults.

run in the family – a common feature in a family; something which is passed from parents to children

- Artistic ability seems to **run in the family**.

hereditary – passed from the genes of a parent to a child

- Diabetes is **hereditary** in our family so I make sure that I eat healthily and keep fit to lessen my chances of getting it.

childhood – the time when someone is a child

- Many children in the world do not have a happy **childhood**.

family background – the details of a person's family regarding education, social status, etc.

- We want our son to marry a girl from a good **family background**.

family gathering / **family get-together** – an informal event where family members meet up

- We're having a **family get-together** to celebrate my mother's birthday.

close-knit – involving groups of people in which everyone supports each other

- We're a **close-knit** family and know that we can rely on each other when one of us needs help.

family ties – the sense of connection between family members

- **Family ties** aren't as strong as they used to be in my country because relatives often live many miles apart and even in different countries.

to care for – to provide the things someone needs, especially someone who is young, old, or ill

- In my country, sons and daughters are expected **to care for** their elderly parents.

a widow – a woman whose husband has died

- Her husband died young and she has been **a widow** for almost thirty years now.

a widower – a man whose wife has died

- My mother died last year so my father is now **a widower**.

to desert – to leave someone without help or in a difficult situation and not come back

- My father **deserted** us when I was young and my mother has brought me up on her own.

Set 10: Idioms

There are many idioms about the family but I've chosen just a few that might prove a useful addition to your family vocabulary. Pick only one or two to learn and make sure that you know how to use them 100% or they won't make sense.

If you're unsure about them, give them a miss rather than risking sounding silly.

get on with / **get along with** – to like someone and have a friendly relationship with them

- I used to fight with my siblings when we were young but I **get on** with them really well now that we're adults.



to fall out with / to have a falling out – to have a disagreement which ruins a relationship with that person

- I **fell out with** my sister when she started dating my boyfriend.
- The two brothers had **a falling out** over the broken toy.

on speaking terms – friendly enough to talk

- My parents had a big argument and are not **on speaking terms** at the moment.

to look alike – to look very similar to someone else

- My twin sister and I **look alike** and people often call us by each other's names.

to take after (someone) – to be very similar to an older family member

- Mila was excellent at drawing. She **took after** her mother who was a famous artist.

a chip off the old block – the person is very similar (in character and personality) to one of their parents

- Sanjay is always cracking jokes, just like his father. He's a real **chip off the old block**.

to follow in someone's footsteps – to do the same thing as someone else did previously, especially someone in your family

- I want to **follow in** my father's **footsteps** and become a doctor like he is.

spitting image – to look extremely similar to someone

- Cher is the **spitting image** of her mother.

wears the trousers – to be the person in a family who holds the authority and makes decisions

- My dad likes to think that he's in charge but it's my mother who **wears the trousers** in our house.

black sheep (of the family) – someone who brings shame to their family by being different or doing something wrong

- My brother first started getting into trouble with the police when he was a teenager and he's become the **black sheep** of the family.

For IELTS-style practise questions

For IELTS-style family-related practise questions and sample answers visit:

www.ieltsjacky.com/family-vocabulary.html

